A decorative border in blue ink surrounds the text. It features a repeating pattern of stylized floral or foliate motifs, creating a rectangular frame with ornate corners and sides.

THE PROMISED LAND

TRANSLATED
FROM THE POLISH OF
LADISLAS REYMONT
BY
M. H. DZIEWICKI

LONDON
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
MCMXXVIII

A LIST OF THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN *THE PROMISED LAND*

(given in the order of their appearance in the text.)

CHARLES BOROVIECKI (borrov-yetsky), of gentle birth, the son of a country landowner and bred in the traditions of his class, has broken away from them, made special studies in chemistry, dyes, and cotton printing, and has besides a great talent for new tints and original designs, and has become manager in that line to the greatest factory in Lodz.

MATTHEW, his manservant of many years' standing, greatly attached to him, but inclined to drink.

MAX BAUM (bah-oom), Charles's first partner, the son of a German factory-owner in Lodz who will not use steam, only hand looms, and is slowly getting ruined. Max works hard and much, sleeps heavily, and drinks a great deal of beer.

MORITZ WELT (velt), Charles's second partner, once his fellow student, now running an agency in Lodz; clever, but crafty and self-seeking.

ROBERT MURRAY, an Englishman, Boroviecki's subordinate in the dyeing department. Very efficient in his own specialty. Personally ugly and a hunchback, and withal perpetually dreaming of marriage.

PRESIDENT HERMAN BUCHOLC (boo-holts), a manufacturer of genius, and owner of the factory where

Charles works; a hard man, who grinds his workmen and tyrannizes cruelly over everybody; old and very ill, which makes his temper worse.

HORN, a Pole of German extraction, the son of a Warsaw dealer; learns business in Lodz at Bucholc's factory; very idealistic, kind-hearted, and quick-tempered.

LEO COHN, a Jewish friend of Welt, and, like him, an agent.

MÜLLER, senior, a German, who, starting work in Lodz as a simple weaver, by dint of industry, thrift, and shrewdness, has now got millions, a great factory, and a palace he has built, but does not live in; can scarcely read or write, and, though kindly, is coarse.

MADA, Müller's only daughter, a naïve, though practical, German girl, deeply, though timidly, in love with Charles Borowiecki.

LUCY ZUKER (tsooker), the most beautiful Jewess in all Lodz, who secretly adores Charles Borowiecki; wife of ZUKER, a big factory-owner, who has got a fortune by making cheap shoddy goods.

WILHEIM MÜLLER, Mada's brother, a rather wild student of the Berlin German type; cares nothing for factories, and lives as fast a life as his father is willing to pay for.

SHAYA MENDELSON, a very big Orthodox Jewish manufacturer, wants to be the foremost man in Lodz.

MME LAPINSKA, nicknamed "The Baroness," and MME STEPHANIE STECKA, two leading figures in the Colony, a flat where a number of Polish women and girls, employed in the town, lodge and board together, and eke

out their resources by giving dinners to clerks and officials. The "Baroness" is looked upon as their Lady Principal.

ROSE MENDELSON, the youngest daughter of Shaya, a girl of strong passions, who wants to be loved for herself, not for her money; a plain young woman with a slight limp, bitter against everybody but a couple of girl friends, and bored to death with everything.

KUROVSKI (koo-roosky), of gentle birth, but a first-rate chemist; has run through a fortune in his early youth, and is building up another in Lodz; a brilliant talker, an assemblage of seeming contradictions, and on familiar terms with Boroviecki.

KESSLER, a partner in the firm of Kessler & Endelman. It is not stated whether his race is Semitic or not, but he despises Poles, and is fond of Polish factory girls, whom he abuses his position to seduce—until retribution comes.

KNOLL, son-in-law, representative, and finally successor of Bucholc. As hard and stingy as his father-in-law, but externally quite a gentleman.

ANTKA (Antonina), a common girl for whom Max Baum has a weakness.

FELIX FISHBIN, a Jewish dealer, unfortunate in money matters, but with a great reputation as a wit, or rather as a merry-andrew.

DR. MIECZYSLAUS (m'yechyslaws) or MIECIO (m'yechyo) VYSOCKI (vysotsky), a scientist of advanced ideas, strongly idealistic, with innumerable poor patients to whom he devotes himself disinterestedly, living with and partly on his mother, who has some resources of her own. She is a strong anti-Semite, whereas he is quite the reverse.

SOHA, a peasant from Boroviecki's country home, Kurov (koorooft).

ANKA (Anne), Boroviecki's cousin and fiancée; a girl of great benevolence, purity, and nobility of mind. She loves him with all her heart, but is proud, sensitive, and not expansive.

DR. JULIUS HAMERSTEIN (hammershtine), called "Hamer" for short; a homœopathist and vegetarian, in attendance on Bucholc, who holds him for a quack, but has in vain tried all the regular physicians.

KOZLOVSKI (kozlosky), a young man from Warsaw, come to start an agency in Lodz, for which he has no qualifications, but spends his time about the streets; a good musician and thinks himself a lady-killer.

GRÜNSPAN, senior, owner of a large factory. Moritz Welt's maternal uncle; rich, but with a bad reputation for dishonest practices.

SIGISMUND GRÜNSPAN, his son, a student in Warsaw University, pedantic and conceited.

MELA (Melania) GRÜNSPAN, Grünspan senior's youngest daughter. Brought up in Warsaw amongst Poles, she is in great sympathy with them and their ideals of life, and is quite out of touch with her own family when she returns to Lodz, though they are proud of her. She is beautiful, graceful, and enjoys an excellent reputation for intelligence and morality.

FELA (Felicia) and TONI (Antonina) two other girl friends of Rose; the former, under a mask of childlike *naïveté*, is said to hide "the makings of a Messalina"; the latter is even more life-weary and blasée than Rose herself.

BERNARD ENDELMAN, a sleeping partner in the firm of Kessler & Endelman. A rich young Jew, indifferent to money, bitterly sarcastic; called a Lodzian Hamlet.

AUGUSTUS, Bucholc's footman, slavishly devoted to his tyrant.

KAMA, a Polish girl at the Colony; in love with Horn, but after a very idealistic and infantine fashion.

ADAM MALINOVSKI, junior, a technical engineer at Shaya's, and a habitu   at the Colony.

MME EMMA LIKIERT (Likk-yert), formerly the mistress of Charles Borowiecki, who has broken with her.

CASIMIR, or Kazio, TRAVINSKI, a cotton-mill-owner of noble family, who has sunk much money in his works and is on the verge of ruin, partly on account of his own and his wife's   sthetic and expensive tastes.

MME NINA TRAVINSKA, his wife, a woman of simple elegance and subtle charm, greatly admired by everyone.

DAVID HALPERN, a man who loves Lodz because of its greatness; always singing its praises and rejoicing in its growth, though he is himself very poor, and has failed in business several times; a profound believer in the goodness of Jehovah.

JOSEPH YASKULSKI, son of a ruined landowner, incompetent, but proud of his noble birth; a clerk in old Mr. Baum's factory; a very hard-working, bashful, awkward, sentimental young fellow.

SOPHY MALINOVSKA, the sister of Adam Malinowski, a factory girl at Kessler's.

MALINOVSKI, SENIOR, a man who has come down in the world, ruined by the part he took in the insurrection of 1863. Returning from his exile in Siberia, he has found a place as mechanician at Kessler's factory.

STANISLAS MENDELSON (Jewish name, SZMUL or SAMUEL, which he objects to), the eldest son of Shaya, and manager of his father's firm.

LEOPOLD LANDAU, heir to a great Jewish firm, and suitor for the hand of Mela Grünspan.

MR. AND MME ENDELMAN, millionaires with æsthetic tastes, which they combine with a shrewd business instinct. Endelman is a very near relative of Bernard, but actively engaged in business.

GROSGLIK, the principal banker in Lodz; a first-class extortioner, who makes money by all sorts of disreputable means; also an enemy of Boroviecki.

MARY GROSGLIK, his only daughter, an ugly, sickly girl, for whom even her father's money cannot easily find a husband.

MESHKOSKI, a technical engineer who believes overwork and capitalism to be an evil, works only enough to get a living, and gives up all his leisure to science and art for their own sake.

STACH (Stanislas) VILCHEK, the son of a poor peasant of Kurov. Gifted with much natural ability, he has been educated by the help of gentlefolk, goes into business, and makes money by every possible means; is devoured by hatred for those above him, and by the craving he feels to enjoy the pleasures he has never had; a peasant gone wrong, he may either make a fortune or end his days in jail.

FATHER SIMON, parish priest in Kurov; a most kind-hearted man, but very bluff in his dealings.

ADAM BOROVIECKI, called "Old Mr. Adam," the father of Charles, paralysed on one side, but always good-humoured.

MR. ZAYONCHKOSKI, a neighbour, who for many a year has come twice weekly to Kurov to play at cards with Mr. Adam and the priest.



CHAPTER I



LODZ was awakening.

One first shrill blast, rending the silence of the small hours, and followed by the ululations of sirens all over the town, noisier and still more noisy, tearing and ripping the air to tatters with their harsh uncouth din—a chorus of gigantic cocks, as it were, crowing from those metal throats of theirs.

With long, dark bodies and slender upstanding necks, looming out of the night, the fog, and the rain, the big factories were slowly rousing up, scintillating with many a flame, and beginning to live and move amid the darkness.

A thin March rain, not without sleet, was falling, falling; covering Lodz with thick viscid mistiness, pattering upon the iron-plate roofs, pouring thence down to the pavements and the black miry, sloughy streets, streaming down the bare tree-trunks, marshalled in low rows close to the walls and shivering in the cold and tossed about by the wind—the wind that now swept the thoroughfares buried in ooze, now rattled and shook the fences, and now tried the roofs; or again would swoop into a quagmire or howl through the branches of a tree.

Boroviecki, awaking, struck a light, just as the alarm-clock set up a furious whirring and ringing, announcing five A. M.

"Tea, Matthew!" he cried, upon the manservant's appearance.

"It's ready," was the reply.

"Are the others still asleep?"

"I shall wake them at once at your order, sir. But last night Mr. Moritz told me he wanted to stay in bed longer this morning."

"Go, wake them.—Have the keys been taken?" Boroviecki asked.

"Schwartz came for them himself."

"Did anybody telephone during the night?"

"Kunke was on duty, and told me nothing about any call when he left."

Boroviecki then hastened to inquire what news there had been in town, while putting on his clothes all the time in a great hurry.

"Oh, only a workman stabbed in the Gayer market-place."

"Nothing else?"

"Ah, yes; Goldberg's works in Cegielniana Street * have burned down. Our fire brigade did come out; but all had gone merrily on, and only the walls were standing.—The fire had come from the drying-room."

"Anything else?"

"Oh no. Everything has run quite well, quite smoothly," and he laughed a nasty cackling laugh.

"Pour out my tea for me. I shall wake Mr. Moritz myself."

Boroviecki, now fully dressed, made for the neighbouring apartment, passing through the dining-room, where a lamp that hung from the ceiling cast its hard white light on a round table, with the cloth laid, on which stood a number of cups and a resplendent samovar.

"Max, it's five—get up!" he called out, opening the door of a room in darkness, out of which came a puff of close air, heavily scented with violets.

Max made no answer, but a creaking, crackling noise came from the bed within.

"Moritz!" Boroviecki then cried to the man next door.

"Not asleep. Could not sleep all night."

"What was the matter?"

"I was thinking of that business of ours—reckoning things up, calculating—and so the time went by."

"Do you know, Goldberg has burned his works, and, as Matthew says, done it 'quite smoothly'?"

* Brick-kiln Street.—*Translator's Note.*

"That is no news to me," Moritz answered with a yawn.

"How could you know?"

"Why, a month since, I was sure he would be forced to. A wonder he put things off so long. He won't get a kopek the more from the insurance people for his delay."

"So, then, he has balanced his accounts!—Was there a great amount of goods?" Boroviecki asked.

"If you mean of *insured* goods—there was."

And they both roared with laughter.

Boroviecki returned to the dining-room and took his breakfast, while Moritz was as usual looking for his clothes all over his room, and swearing at Matthew.

"If you leave my things about any more, I'll smash your face all to pieces—make it as scarlet-red as any print of ours!"

"Morning!" Max bawled, having awakened at last.

"Won't you get up? It's past five."

His reply was lost in the hubbub made by the sirens, which sounded as though just outside, and bellowed all together for some seconds, so loud that the very windows were trembling.

Moritz, wearing only his overcoat thrown over his shoulders above his underclothing, now came in and sat by the stove, where a quantity of resinous chips were joyously crackling.

"Are you staying at home?" Boroviecki inquired.

"I am. Weis had asked me to go to Tomashov and take him a set of new carders. But I shall not just now. It's cold, and I do not feel inclined."

"And you, Max, are you staying indoors as well?"

"Where should I go in such a hurry? To those scurvy shanties?—Besides, I had a row with father yesterday."

"You and your eternal rows with everybody! They will end badly for you, Max!" Moritz growled in strong disgust, as he poked the fire.

"Mind your own business, you!" Max shouted from the other room. The bed creaked noisily, and Max, in underwear and slippers, stood in the doorway.

"Well, but it is my business.—Very much so."

"Let me alone, and don't worry me.—What! After Charles here has just awakened me (the devil knows why), must I have this fellow come ragging me into the bargain?"—And returning to his own room, he presently came back, carrying his clothes, which he proceeded to put on.

"You see, it's this enterprise of ours that you are injuring with your continual gibes and taunts," Moritz went on to say, settling on his pinched Semitic nose the glasses that were always falling off again.

"What! where! how's that?"

"Everywhere. Yesterday at the Blumentals' you told them that most of our manufacturers were mere swindlers and thieves."

"So I did; and what I said I'll stand by." He smiled scornfully at Moritz, eyeing him with an expression of considerable dislike.

"You, Max Baum," Moritz continued, "have to refrain from such sayings; you have not the right to speak, I tell you."

"For what reason, pray?" Max said, but in a lower voice, and leaning over the table.

"If you can't see by yourself, I must point it out. First: because what others do concerns you in no wise. Does it matter to you whether they are honest men or robbers? We are—all of us—here in Lodz for the sole purpose of doing business, and of doing good business. None of us intends to stay here for ever; everyone makes his money in the way he is able. You are a Red, a Radical——"

"I am an honest man!" the other snapped at him, whilst pouring out his tea.

Boroviecki, with his elbows on the table and his face hid in his hands, sat and listened.

At Max's reply Moritz turned away angrily and his glasses fell off and struck against his chair. His thin lips wore a sneer of bitter irony. Smoothing his scanty, yet pitch-black beard with a hand that several diamond rings adorned, he

answered: "No nonsense, Max. If you run about making such public accusations, you may injure our credit. We three, men without capital, are about to start a factory, and so require credit, and so too the favourable opinion of such as can give credit. We need at present to be pleasant fellows, complaisant, good-natured, kindly, in a word. If Borman tells you Lodz is a vile place, tell him it is vile as much as you like—he's a big fish, and must be humoured. Yet what was it you said to Knoll about the man? That he was a lout and a blockhead! Man, man! no one is a blockhead who has got millions by his brains—and has stuck fast to those millions (of which we want our share)! We shall talk of such men and run them down at our ease when we have the money, just as we are now forced to sit close because we need them. But let Charles speak out and say whether I am not in the right: I have at heart the future of all three of us."

"Moritz is pretty completely in the right," Boroviecki uncompromisingly declared, looking with cold grey eyes into those of the indignant Max.

"You are right," the latter rejoined; "I know it well.—Right in a Lodzian sense, though!—But remember: I am an honest man!"

"Bah! A stock phrase, an old hackneyed, parrot phrase!"

"Moritz, you're a vile Jew!"

"And you, a namby-pamby German fool!"

"You are quarrelling about words, both of you," Boroviecki coolly remarked, as he proceeded to put on his overcoat. "Sorry I can stay no longer, but I have to get our new printing department under way."

Here Baum, now quite calmed down, reverted to the conversation they had had together not long since, and their resolution to start a factory.

"We shall do so!" they cried.

"Yes. I have no money; neither have you. Nor has he." And Max burst out laughing.—"So," he went on, "we have just enough, just exactly enough to start quite a big factory."

What have we to lose? And," he added after a pause, "there is always something to gain. Well then, shall we or shall we not start one? Once more, which is it to be?"

"We shall, we shall!" they answered together.

"Ah, what was that about Goldberg's works? Burned down, eh?" Baum queried suddenly.

"Yes—and his accounts balanced. Oh, a shrewd fellow he is, and like to make millions."

"Or—end in jail."

"Fool's chatter!" Moritz blurted out impatiently. "Talk that sort of thing in Berlin or Paris or Warsaw: not here in Lodz. It would create unpleasantness."

Max said not a word.

Again the sirens lifted up their harsh nerve-shattering voices, repeating ever louder and louder their morning song.

"Well, I'm off," Charles said. "Till our next meeting!—Don't squabble, lie down again, and dream of the millions we shall make!"

"And made they shall be!" the two others shouted in chorus; and all three shook hands in good-fellowship.

"What's the date?" said Max. "Let's note it down: it's well worth bearing in mind."

"And put a parenthesis after," added Charles, "for the man's name who first tries to trick the others."

"You, Borowiecki," Moritz returned in cold level tones, "are a gentleman. You sport a coat of arms on your visiting-card, and put "Von" to your signatures. And yet, more than any of us, you are a man of Lodz."

"I?" Charles exclaimed. "And what are you, then?"

"A man who at any rate does not care to babble. I care to earn money. Your people and the Germans are first-rate, but in the talking line."

Charles Borowiecki buttoned his overcoat carefully, turned the collar up, and walked out.

It was drizzling steadily, and the rain fell in slanting lines half-way up the little windows of the cottages that stood huddled close to one another along that end of Piotrovska Street, only in places thrust aside, as it were, by a huge

factory or the imposing mansion of some manufacturer.

A row of stunted lime-trees, bordering the side-walk, bent their heads to the blasts roaring down the miry street, which was almost pitch-dark; for the infrequent lamps gave out only tiny circles of yellow light that glimmered upon the thick black mud, and on the dim figures of the workmen in their hundreds, hurrying in hot haste and deep silence to the call of the sirens, now heard at rarer and rarer intervals in the neighbourhood.

"Those millions—shall we make them?" Charles wondered, halting to cast a glance at the jumble of chimneys, looming up out of the dark, and at the sombre motionless bulks of the factories, which rose on every side in stony stillness, and whose red towering walls seemed still to be rising before him as he gazed.

While he was standing thus, someone hurrying past called out: "Morning!"

"Morning!" he murmured in reply, and walked on once more, his heart racked with gnawing doubts. Thousands of thoughts, figures, combinations, and conjectures were whirling about in his mind, until he scarce could tell where he was or whither he was going.

Great numbers of workers, in black silent swarms, would issue suddenly from side streets that looked like canals of sable mud, and out of houses which arose on the skirts of the town, as so many huge dust-heaps; and they filled Piotrovskia with a confused noise of footsteps, of twinkling, jingling tin lanterns, with the dry clatter of wooden soles, and with the sucking squash of feet in the slushy mire.

On they poured, overflowing the whole thoroughfare, filling the side-walks, plodding along through the mud and water-pools in the middle; some to join the straggling mobs outside the gates of their factory, whilst others, walking forward in long files, disappeared within the gates.

Out of the profound gloom, light after light began to appear. Black squat masses of building blazed in a sudden with hundreds of flaming windows, like so many eyes of fire; and all at once electric suns shone and dispelled the shadows

where they were suspended, scintillating in the vacuum of their globes.

Now white smoke-wreaths soared up from the mighty forest of chimneys over which they drifted to and fro, in the likeness of a vault upheld by countless pillars and quivering to every ripple of the electric light.

The streets were all but empty, the lanterns were extinguished, and the last sirens had uttered their voices. In the hush that followed, only the drip-drop of the rain and the whistling of the wind were to be heard in the street. Taverns and bakeries were opening now, and stray glimmers were seen in garrets, or in the window of some basement into which the mud from the street was slowly descending.

But in more than a hundred factories life was seething—seething feverishly. The dull roar of the engines rumbled through the foggy air, and resounded in the ears of Boroviecki, who was still pacing the street and gazing at the factory windows, behind which were dimly discernible the workmen's figures and the outlines of the huge machines.

He had no mind to start work just at present. He had a joy in walking about thus, focussing in his mind's eye that factory of his that was still in the future, calling it into being, starting it, and watching how it worked. So absorbed was he in this day-dream that now and again he could distinctly hear the machinery going, and feel his imaginary building as already in actual existence. He saw the bales of goods, the offices, the purchasers pouring in, and the whole place alive and humming with activity. He even had in mind a flood of wealth, rolling as it were to his very feet. He smiled ecstatically; his eyes shone bright, though brimming with tears, and a flush of intense joy suffused his pale handsome face.—With a quick movement of his hand he stroked his beard, moist with rain, and came to himself once more.

"I am a fool!" he muttered, disgusted with himself, and looked around as though he feared someone might have witnessed that passing fit of weakness.

No one was near; but the grey dawn had come; and as the day broke, with faint beams plunged in mist, the out-

lines of the trees and factories and houses peered out little by little, ever more and more distinct.

From beyond Piotrovska turnpike came long lines of peasants' carts, splashing through ruts and mud-holes; great vans and lorries went the opposite way, laden with coal, and with them open platforms on wheels, piled with spun yarn, bales of cotton, dry goods, or barrels; whilst among these there glided swiftly little britzkas, or tradesmen's traps, hurrying to business, and a stray cab here and there, with some belated official inside.

Towards the end of Piotrovska, Boroviecki turned off into a narrow lane without any side-walk, and lit only by a few suspended lanterns and by the light from an enormous factory, already in full swing, all the windows of its four storeys pouring forth floods of splendour. Entering, he hurriedly changed into a dingy, much stained blouse, and made for his own department.

CHAPTER II



“GOOD day to you, Murray!” cried Charles.

Clad in a long, blue wrapper, Murray appeared from behind a row of movable cauldrons, in which the dyes were being prepared. In the electric light, saturated with vapours of many prismatic hues, his long, bony, clean-shaven face, lit up with eyes of so pale a blue that they seemed to have faded from their colour, gave something of the impression of a caricature in *Punch*.

“Ah, Boroviecki! I wanted to see you last night; but when I got to your rooms, I found only Moritz, whom I dislike, and so did not wait for you.”

“He’s a good fellow, though.”

“Much I care for his good-fellowship!”

“Is No. 57 printing yet?”

“Surely. They got the dye from me.”

“Is it fast?”

“Well, the first few metres were not quite up to the mark. —Oh, and the Central has ordered five hundred pieces of that llama of yours.”

“Aha!—No. 24—the sea-green tint.”

“Bech, too—at the Branch Depot—has telephoned for the same amount. Shall we set to work at that?”

“Too late this day. We have pressing orders, and summer textiles to print that are still more pressing.”

“They have telephoned for our flannelette, No. 7.”

“We are getting them calendered. I must go at once and see about them.”

“But I had something to tell you.”

“I’m listening,” Charles replied, with more politeness than cordiality.

Murray took his hand and led him into a corner beyond the large barrels that people came continually to ladle dyes out of. The "Kitchen," as this department was called, stood in profound shadow. Underneath low-hanging penthouses like steel umbrellas, broad copper stirrers revolved slowly by machinery, diffusing the dyes throughout the great cauldrons, which shone with a ruddy metallic glow.

The whole place was quivering to the palpitations of the engines. Long transmission belts, like pale yellow serpents of interminable length, were running at furious speed just beneath the ceiling, whirling round above the double line of coppers, gliding along the walls and crossing one another so high up as scarcely to be visible through the pungent fumes that continually mounted from the cauldrons below, and dimmed the lights, and escaped into the rooms beyond by every outlet available.

Forms of workmen in their shirt-sleeves, stained and grimy all over with the various dyes, flitted about, noiseless as ghosts, to vanish in the murky air; and small trucks, laden with dyes quite ready for use, rumbled along as they came and went on their way to the printing-chamber and the dyeing-vats.

A horribly acrid odour of sulphur pervaded the place.

Murray now whispered low in Charles's ear: "I bought a set of furniture yesterday. Furniture, look you, upholstered in yellow silk, Empire style! for the parlour; for the dining-room, a Henri IV oaken suite. And for the boudoir——"

"And when's the wedding to come off?" Boroviecki rather impatiently cut in.

"H'm—well, it's not quite decided as yet. As soon as possible would be my notion."

"Then you have proposed at last?" Charles queried, somewhat satirically eyeing Murray's odd and rather ludicrous figure. The man's notable stoop seemed at the moment nothing less than a deformity; and with his strongly protruding under jaw, he forcibly reminded Boroviecki of an ape.

"In a way, in a way," Murray returned. "She told me only last Sunday how she would like her home furnished.



I questioned her on every particular, and she answered just like a woman talking of her future home."

"It was just the same last time."

"Ah, but then I felt not half so sure as I do now!" was the eager reply.

"Well, things being so, I wish you joy with all my heart; when may I see your wife that is to be?"

"Oh, all in good time—in good time."

"Yes, and I think you'll get married in good time too," Charles muttered, with a touch of irony.

"You will call on me to-morrow, won't you? I must have your opinion on the furniture."

"All right."

"At what time?"

"After dinner."

Murray went back to his laboratory and his dyes, while Charles hastened away, making for the dye-chamber along many a passage and corridor blocked with tiny carts full of wet and dripping cotton goods, and with piles of cottons heaped high on the floor, awaiting their turn.

At each step he was called upon to decide matters of every kind. Now and again he would examine a test bit of dyed stuff brought by some workman, and pass judgment: "Good"; or: "One test more," and stride on in the chaotic hubbub of an inferno, with the eyes of a hundred men upon him.

Everything—floors, ceilings, walls, and machines—was vibrating with the din—motors roared, transmission belts and gearing bands buzzed and rustled and hissed, trucks rattled on the asphalt flooring, wheels hummed noisily; whilst out of that sea of confused noise-waves, there would at times emerge a piercing scream, or the ponderous snorting of the biggest of all the dynamos.

"Mr. Borowiecki!"

Charles strained his eyes to make out who called, but could not. In the dense mass of vapour the dyeing-room was filled with, there was nothing discernible but the faintly outlined machines,

"Mr. Boroviecki!"

He started: someone had caught hold of his arm.

"You, Mr. President!" he exclaimed on recognizing the owner of the place.

"I am chasing you, but how fast you fly about!"

"Work, Mr. President, work!"

"Yes, yes, I quite understand.—But I am just dead tired."

After a pause, "Getting on, hey?" he asked.

"We are," was Charles's curt reply, as he walked on.

The other, leaning on his shoulder, dragged himself on toilsomely with the aid of a stout stick. Though he was bent almost double, his round red hawk-eyes were levelled straight in front of him, out of a large, shining, circular face adorned with short side-whiskers and a moustache cut in a straight line over the under lip.

"Well, and is this Watson plant turning out good work?"

"It is printing fifteen thousand metres every day."

"That's not much," he remarked in an undertone, and, letting go Charles's shoulder, seated himself on a truck laden with raw percale, pulled down his heavy caftan, and remained at rest with his hands on the top of his stick.

Away Boroviecki darted towards the big dyeing-vats. Over these, and stretched upon large revolving cylinders, were rolls of stuffs which dipped into the dye, splashing it on to the faces and over the shirts of the men; these stood by, motionless, now and then taking up some of the liquid to see whether the dye, constantly being absorbed by the stuffs, was still sufficiently strong.

There were some score of cylinders, standing in a row, and whirling with never-ceasing wearisome monotony; and the long, twisting rolls of cloth, moving slantwise as they soaked up the dye, gleamed through the hazy air in dull stains and patches—red, ochre, and blue.

Further away, beyond the double line of iron pillars in great number that went all the length of that vast chamber to sustain the upper storeys of the factory, came the rinsing-plant: long troughs filled with boiling water, frothing with soap and soda, washing-machines and wringers, all of which

the raw stuff was made to pass through. The spray and foam from the beaters were wafted about the whole room, making so dense a cloud over the rinsing-troughs that the lights glimmered through them as in a glass, darkly.

Over the stuffs, when rinsed, the "grippers" closed their jaws, drawing them up and out, as on crossed arms stretched forth. Thus they delivered them to the workmen, who, seizing them with long poles, tumbled them into the tiny carts every now and then pushed forward.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the manufacturer called out to someone—a passing shadow looming through the fog; but it was not he.

He rose to his feet—those poor feet of his, so racked with rheumatism—and shambled about the room, in whose hot atmosphere he felt a joy. He loved to steep his aching limbs in a room reeking with those acrid fumes, and running with water splashed about everywhere from rinsing-tubs and vats, streaming underfoot, and dripping in an all but continuous downpour from the ceiling.

The furious clanking of the centrifugals, as they drove the moisture out of the drying stuffs, sounded like a tremulous incessant moan: it travelled from chamber to chamber, working on the nerves of the men employed to watch what went forward, completely absorbed though they seemed in the working of the machines; and it died away only where the already printed stuffs hung out to dry, like many-coloured waving flags.

Charles was now in the adjoining room. Here some inferior cloth for men's apparel was being dyed black by English machinery of antiquated type. Here the light streamed in through many a window, giving a greenish hue to the dark vapours and the men who, with folded arms and motionless as columns of basalt, watched the machines through which the cloth was passing—many thousand metres of it—and taking up the foaming splashy black dye, made fast at once by the mordant.

The factory was in full swing, and the walls perpetually

vibrating. Elevators, sunk into the thickness of the walls, connected the ground-floor with the upper storeys. Every minute there came a dull crash from some part of the great chamber: it was an elevator taking up or bringing down men, trucks, and dyed fabrics.

Here, too, daylight now began to peer. Its dingy rays filtered athwart the tiny panes, much soiled with dust and steam; it brought out with greater distinctness the outlines of machinery and men, but everything was tinted a greyish green, save for the long streaks of red vapour floating about, and the halo-wreathed gas-lights that shone through the dust-laden air. Both men and machinery looked like phantoms carried along by some resistless motive power—specks and shreds fluttering hither and thither, now huddled together in a tangled mass, now driven once more apart by the whirlpool that overwhelmed them.

Herman Bucholz, owner of the works, having inspected the dyeing-vats, moved on farther.

He went through all the pavilions, then passed above by an elevator (to go down again on foot); he made his way along the passages, looked over the machines, examined the goods they made. At times he would eye the hands with a lowering gaze; at others he spoke a few words that in an instant flew all over the place. Then he would seat himself, often beside doorways, on bales of goods; or hide away somewhere, to reappear in quite another part of the building—in the coal depot, or amongst the goods trucks that stood lined up on one side of the large courtyard, which was fenced round by the high factory walls.

He was everywhere, and passed by sombre and silent like an autumn night. His appearance would cut short all conversation; heads bent down, figures shrank into themselves, men withdrew their gaze as if they were afraid to meet those eyes of his.

He often came across Charles, as the latter was patrolling his department, and their eyes would meet in a friendly glance. Herman Bucholz liked him, as the manager of his

printing-chamber. Not only so: he even valued the man at the full amount (ten thousand roubles) of his yearly salary. "He's the very best machine I have in the whole department," Bucholz often thought, as he looked at him.

He had himself no longer any connexion with the work of the factory, which was now managed by his son-in-law; but the habits of a lifetime brought him there every day along with the men. He always breakfasted and stayed there till noon. Dinner over, he would either drive to town, or lounge about stock-brokers' offices, warehouses, or cotton stores. He could by no means live apart from the mighty kingdom he had founded by his industrial genius and the labour of a lifetime. He felt the want of knowing himself surrounded with those walls that throbbed with such intense activity; he was at ease when, and only when, he walked amongst lines of transmission belts in motion, and sniffed the pungent odours of dyes, of bleaching-chambers, of raw fabrics, and the strong scent of grease seething in the engine-joints.

He was now seated in the printing-room, shading his eyes and gazing round him at the place, well lighted by large windows, and at the printing-machines working at full speed and in dull, depressing silence. They worked and worked on, always at the same rate of unchanging speed; and never-ending were the lengths of tissues which, passing between the copper cylinders that pressed the coloured patterns into them, vanished into the drying-room on an upper floor.

The men behind the machines fed the stuffs to them with quiet reposeful movements; the foremen stood in front, one or another of them every now and then stooping forward to examine the cylinders, supply more colours out of big tubs standing by, and once more stand at gaze, looking up at the innumerable metres of stuffs flying swiftly past. Every printing-machine had its own separate steam-engine, and each of these a great fly-wheel, like a shield of polished metal, whirling on its axis with such extreme velocity that nothing could be seen of it but a sort of silvery halo that scattered a shimmering splendour all around.

Boroviecki too had slipped in here, to know how the machines just installed did their work, compare samples of freshly printed articles with each other, and give directions. Sometimes he had with a gesture stopped the working of one of the huge machines; and having scrutinized it carefully, he had passed on. The grand co-ordinated movement of the whole factory, the hundreds of machines, the thousands of people watching them with the most intense and all but religious attention, the vast heaps of goods which lay there or were borne from room to room—from wash-house to dyeing-chamber, from dyeing-chamber to drying-room, thence to be calendered and off again ever so many times, before they came out, finished and perfect—all this entranced and enthralled him.

Only at intervals did he rest awhile in his own private room, close to the "Kitchen," as it was called. There—whilst preparing to overhaul the samples sent from abroad and pasted into the great piles of albums his table was littered with, and to devise other new patterns—he would fall to thinking, or rather trying to think, about himself and that plan of starting a factory which he and his two friends had been forming. But he could not; nor indeed could he retire within himself for a moment. This factory's noise was too loud, even here in his cabinet; its throbbings and pulsations reverberated through his nerves, and almost blended with his heart-beats. It would not let him alone; it dragged him by force out of himself, and drew him back to the services and duties expected of everyone within its sphere and control.

Up he started, once again on the move. But the day passed away, slow and wearisome beyond measure. At about four he went to the cashier's office, where he took tea and telephoned, inviting Moritz to a play that night: some charity performance by a troupe of amateurs.

"Welt," someone told him, "left us but half an hour ago."

"Was he here then?"

"Yes, and took fifty pieces of white goods."

"For himself?"

"No: Amfiloff's order; for Charkoff.—May I offer you a cigar?"

"To be sure you may; I feel awfully run down."

And he sat down on a tall stool at an unused desk, and lit the weed.

The head accountant, who had very respectfully treated him to the cigar, stood in front of him, filling a pipe; while several youngsters, perched upon benches that were mere strips of wood, were busy writing in big red-lined books.

To Boroviecki's tired nerves the silence that reigned here, the scratching sounds of the pens, and the clock's monotonous ticks were the reverse of soothing.

"What news, Mr. Schwartz?" he asked.

"Oh, Rosenberg has failed."

"To what amount, pray?"

"We can't say yet for sure; but my notion is he'll compound with his creditors. What use would it have been to come an ordinary cropper?" And he chuckled as he pressed the moist tobacco into his pipe.

"Does our firm lose anything?"

"It depends on how many roubles he pays in the hundred."

"Does Bucholc know?"

"Till now he has not been round here. But when he knows, ah! how his corns will shoot! The man's a bad loser."

"He may die of a stroke!" one of the lads at work said in an undertone.

"That were a pity!"

"Truly, and a great pity! Lord forbid!"

"May he live to be a hundred, and be master of a hundred millions, and palaces, and factories too!"

"And may he," added the same whispering voice as before, "die of cholera a hundred times over!"

There was silence again.

Schwartz glanced furiously at the boys who were writing, and then at Boroviecki deprecatingly, as if to excuse himself; but the latter, seemingly bored, was gazing out of the window.

The air of the place was really saturated with boredom. Its walls, panelled up to the very ceiling with wood painted to imitate oak, and crowded on every side with shelves and books arranged in rows upon them, seemed to be of a dingy yellow hue; for opposite the window a great four-storey building of bare red bricks shed a dismal greyish-rusty glimmer into the office.

The yard it looked out on was paved with asphalt, and traversed by occasional pedestrians. Across this yard, at the height of the first floor, and with a droning purr that incessantly shook the office windows, ran several large transmission bands, as thick as a wrestler's arm.

And over the factory there stretched the expanse of the sky—a dull dirty sheet, dripping with drizzling rain, that ran down the dirty walls in streaks more dirty still, and soaking into the cotton and coal-dust with which the windows were covered, formed into viscid loathsome clots upon their surface.

A samovar, heated by gas in a corner of the office, was beginning to simmer.

"Mr. Horn, will you kindly give me a cup of tea?"

Horn brought him one and remained standing by Borowiecki's side.

"Anything the matter?" asked the latter, whose relations with the young fellow were rather intimate.

"Nothing," Horn snarled, darting a surly glance at Schwartz.

"You seem much out of sorts."

"The gentleman," Schwartz put in, "is not at ease here. Drawing-room life has made it hard for him to work in our office—or anywhere."

"Cattle," Horn retorted angrily, but so low that Schwartz did not catch the words, "cattle may take easily to the yoke: men cannot."

He went back to his desk, where he sat gazing, now at the red walls, now out of the window, on the heaps of carded cotton ready to be spun.

"Another cup of tea, please," Charles said to Horn. There

was something wrong and he wanted to find out what it was.

Horn brought the tea with his eyes fixed on the ground, and was turning away, when Charles said to him: "Mr. Horn, would you mind coming round to my room in half an hour?"

"Very well, sir. There is something I wished to see you about, but I was putting it off till to-morrow. Perhaps you would hear me now!"

And he was about to unbosom himself, when a woman, driving four children in front of her, suddenly forced her way in.

"Praised be Jesus Christ!" she said under her breath; and, glancing round at the many heads that looked up from their desks, she bent down to Charles's very feet; for he stood nearest to her, and was the most prepossessing of them all.

"Honoured master," she said, speaking in the primitive dialect of the peasants, "behold me here with a request: for that my husband's head has been plucked off by a machine, wherefore I am now a lone widow with children, and in misery along with them. And thus have I come to beg for justice, that you may grant us assistance, because that machine has torn off my husband's head, O honoured master!" And, bursting into tears, she again bowed as low as Borowiecki's knees.

"You get out!" Schwartz thundered at her. "Be off with you! This is not the place where such matters are settled."

"Be quiet, you!" Charles shouted, turning on Schwartz.

"By your leave, sir," said Schwartz, "that woman has been haunting every one of our offices for the last six months, and there's no getting rid of her."

"But why isn't the business settled and done with?"

"Shall I tell you, sir? Why, that lout put his head under the wheel on purpose; he wanted to work no more and cheat the factory. Are we then to pay money for this woman and her bastards?"

"What! what! my children bastards?" she shrieked, rushing at Schwartz, who shrunk behind his desk in bodily fear.

"Woman, be still!" cried he; then: "Madam, I beseech

you, be calm—and tell your well-born little ones not to weep,” he added, shaking all over, as he pointed to the children, who were clinging to their mother’s skirts and roaring lustily.

“Honoured master,” she said to Charles, “so far he has spoken true: that ever since the potato-digging season I have been coming here; but if they put me off for ever, promising to pay, I must for ever beg and beg as I do.”

“Be easy; I shall speak to the chief to-day. Come again in a week, and you shall be righted.”

“Oh may our Lord Jesus and She of Chenstohova grant thee health—wealth—honours of all kinds, beloved master!” she exclaimed, falling down on her knees to kiss his hands.

He broke away from her and went out, but lingered a little in the main passage; and as she followed him out too, he asked her: “From where are ye?”

“O sir! I am from near Skierniewice.”

“And have you been long in Lodz?”

“It will be two years now since we all came here—to our undoing!”

“Do you go out to work at all now?”

“And is it any work they would give me to do, those pagans, those pestilential heretics? Moreover, with my orphans here about me, is there anything that I can do?”

“How then do you live?”

“In misery, honoured sir; in misery. Even when my poor husband was alive, we often and often had only a pinch of salt to eat, and hunger with it; still we lived somehow, though how I know not. Now he is gone, I do some chores in the Old Town, and now and then I get a little washing—and that’s a fact.” She spoke volubly, wrapping her children up in filthy tattered shawls while she spoke.

“Why not return home again?”

“I shall, honoured sir, as soon as they have made it up to me for the loss of my man. Oh yes, I shall!—And may neither plague nor fire spare this miserable town of Lodz! May our Lord keep no evil away from it, and may all the dwellers therein perish to the very last!”

"Hush, hush," Charles said, slightly shocked; "ye have no cause for cursing."

"I—no cause?" she cried, astounded, raising to his her own tear-faded pale-blue eyes, staring out of her plain wan face, which poverty had worn to skin and bone. "What! honoured sir, we were in the country—only 'Komorniki,'* it is true, for my man had but three acres left to him; and as we had not the wherewithal to build a cabin, we lived at our cousins'. We worked for others indeed, but we had decent lodgings, we planted potatoes and kept geese—sometimes a pig—on our land. And we had eggs our fowls gave us, and a cow. And here—what? From day-break till nightfall my poor man was hard at work: yet we had not much to eat, and lived as live the lowest beggars—as dogs live!"

"But wherefore did ye come at all? Better had ye stayed in the country."

"Wherefore indeed?" she replied drearily. "Ah, do I know? Everybody came hither, and we did likewise. Adam had gone to Lodz one spring; leaving his wife, he had gone. And when harvest was over, he came back, but in such fine apparel that no one knew who he was. A silver watch he had, and a ring; and more money than he could have earned in the country by three years' work. We were amazed, and the man (a murrain on him!) told us lies. They had paid him to lure the people away from the country, to whom he promised God knows what. So two labourers went off with him at once; and afterwards all those who were able started for this town of Lodz. They were all hankering after grand attire and watches—and the deeds of the flesh. I would fain have kept my man at home, for why should we come to a strange place, and to people quite at the back of the world? Then he gave me a beating and went—and came back later to take me along with him. O Lord, O dear Lord!" she sobbed bitterly, wiping her tears away with unwashed hands. A fit of crying seized her and shook her body so that her little ones clutched at her dress, weeping in silence with her.

* *Komorniki*—peasant lodgers who have no house of their own, but must work for the lodgings they occupy.—*Translator's Note.*

"Well," said Charles, "here are five roubles. Take them and do as I have told you."

He turned on his heel and walked off: he had quite enough of this. Sentiment, tenderness—these were things he was training himself to dislike, and the dying embers of feeling, which he had set himself to quench, had been painfully stirred by that woman.

He stopped for a time in front of the Mather-Platt oxydizing apparatus, through which the goods already printed and dried had to pass; he gazed somewhat absently at the patterns newly formed, or rather developed by passing through the apparatus: yellow flowers, touched off with brown shades, came out in dark crimson tints under the influence of heat and complex aniline salts.

The afternoon recess now being over, the factory was once more full of busy life.

Charles looked out of his office window: the weather had suddenly grown lowering, and the snow that fell in thick flakes whitened the courtyard and walls. He saw Horn standing near the porter's lodge (where the only way of exit was to be found) and talking with the same woman he had been speaking to himself. She was thanking him very warmly for something that she put into her bosom.

"Mr. Horn!" he cried, putting his head out of the window.

"Ah! I was just coming to you," Horn replied, and he entered a minute later.

"That woman—what were you advising her to do?" Charles said rather sternly, looking out of the window.

The other hesitated for an instant; his face, comely as a maiden's, flushed scarlet, and there was a flash in his kindly blue eyes.

"I told her to see a lawyer and bring an action against the factory."

"And what business is it of yours?" Boroviecki asked, biting his lips and drumming on the window-pane.

"What business?" Horn repeated, and after a pause: "Misery or wrong of any sort is very much my——"

"And what are you here?" Charles cut in sharply, sitting down at his long table.

"I?" he answered, taken aback. "Why, you know very well, sir: an articled clerk in that office."

"Then, Mr. Horn, I'm much afraid you will not be that for long."

"Perhaps so; and if so, it's all the same to me," was the muttered reply.

"But not all the same to us—to the factory where you are one wheel among many thousands! We received you here that you might work, not play the philanthropist. Here, where everything requires the utmost regularity and order and harmony, you would simply become a disturbing influence."

"But I am a man, not a machine."

"At home you are. But at the factory no one will ask you about that, nor require proofs of your humanitarianism. In our factory," he went on, warming to his subject, "what we want is your brains, your muscles; and we pay you for them—and for nothing else. Here you are but a machine, just like the rest of us; you have to do nothing but what belongs to your own sphere. This is no nursery-ground for budding angels; this——"

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the young man here broke in.

"Mr. Horn, listen to me when I speak to you!" Charles cried angrily, flinging a large album of samples down on the floor. "Bucholtz has taken you on my recommendation. I know your family, and am your best friend; but I see what the matter with you is."

"Do you talk of common humanity as of an illness?"

"When you give such advice to all who have any claim on the factory, you place me in a false position.—It's the law you ought to have gone in for—a lawyer's business is to plead the cause of the unfortunate and the oppressed—and be well paid for it, of course," he added cynically; he could not remain angry for long with those gently pleading eyes looking into his.—"But enough of this," he continued. "A longer stay here will make you see things as they really are: you will

get to know all about those poor downtrodden people, and how they must be dealt with. And then, when you have taken up your father's business after him, you will confess how very right I was."

"No, Mr. Borowiecki," Horn replied; "I shall not stay here any longer, nor take up my father's business."

This was unexpected. "Then what do you intend to do?" Charles asked.

"I cannot say as yet. And this I tell you quite openly, in spite of the hard—the cruelly hard—things you said just now; for I know how impossible it is for you, the director of such big works as these, to say anything else."

"You mean to leave us, then; so much is clear to me. But why, I cannot tell."

Horn burst out: "Because, amongst this vile rabble of Lodz, I find life unbearable! Can't you understand me—you, who yourself belong to society?—Yes, because I loathe, and with all my soul, not only the factories, but the men—Bucholc, Rosenstein, and the rest of them—that infamous trading gang!"

"Ha ha! that's exquisite! What a daisy you are!—Really there is none like you, none!"

"I say no more," said Horn, extremely pained.

"Please yourself; the less nonsense you talk, the better."

"Then farewell!"

"Bye-bye! Ha ha! Oh, what a splendid actor you would make!"

"Mr. Borowiecki!" the other cried.

"Well?"

Horn bowed silently and went out. He could not find words.

"A first-class cry-baby!" Borowiecki muttered after him, and made for the drying-room, where he was at once plunged in a parching torrid atmosphere.

There stood great chests of iron plate, filled with heated and anhydrous air, working with a rumbling sound like far-off thunder, and pouring forth an endless succession of coloured stuffs, quite dry and stiff as buckram.

These stuffs, heaped up on the ground, on low stands, on tiny trucks moving noiselessly in and out, gleamed in the clear dry light of the room (that had great windows on every side), and appeared with dimmed tints of old gold, of violet-shaded purple, of ultramarine hues, and the hues of faded emeralds; all in piles, as it were of metal plates, dully bright, and vivid without lustre.

The workmen, who were only useful supplements to the machines, moved about silently in their shirt-sleeves, with bare feet and bleared eyes, fatigued by the never-ending riot of colours before them.

Sometimes one or another of them would gaze out of the windows at the outside world, seen from the height of the fourth floor—either at Lodz close beneath, seen through the mists and smoke-wreaths pierced by numberless chimneys, house roofs, and leafless trees; or beyond it at the fields, stretching away to the sky-line—greyish-white dingy spaces, flooded by the thaws of the coming spring, and sprinkled here and there with the brick-red of factory buildings, which in the distance took the livid tones of red flayed flesh; and farther still, at the tiny hamlets dotted about, that seemed crouching flat along the ground; or at the roads winding among the fields like ribbons of jet-black mud, and glittering athwart rows of skeleton poplars.

The dynamos rumbled on incessantly; incessantly, too, did the transmission belts buzz on, everything keeping time to the work done in those huge metal chests which, taking in the goods wet from the printing-room, disgorged them parched and dry. In that great rectangular chamber, full of wan colours and the wan light of a March day, and with wan men at work there, these drying-chests looked like weird shrines of some god of might who ruled there with supreme sway.

Charles's nerves were shaken, and it was with less attention than usual that he examined the stuffs to see whether any had been scorched or dried to excess.

"Foolish fellow!" he would say to himself, thinking of

young Horn; and again and again the noble-looking young man, with those clear blue eyes gazing at him with silent pain, disappointment, and reproach, would rise up in his memory, and he felt somehow vaguely distressed and uneasy. As he eyed the crowd of workers, certain things Horn had said came back to him.

"I too was like him once upon a time!" And his mind would fly back to old days; but he did not give way to those memories. His lips curled scornfully, and his eyes looked hard and cold.

"All that is over—quite over!" he thought, yet with a strange feeling that seemed almost like regret for old days—for the illusions that were not to return—for those noble impulses that Life had now swept away. Presently, however, this mood left him, and he was himself again: he was what he was—the manager of Herman Bucholtz's printing-room, a chemical specialist, cool, hard-headed, caring for nobody, capable of anything—in short, as Moritz had called him, a typical man of Lodz.

In this mood, when passing through the calendering department, he was met by a workman.

"What is it you want?" he asked curtly, as he walked on.

"Pray, sir, Mr. Pufke, our foreman, tells us that from the first of April there will be fifteen fewer hands employed here."

"Right.—We shall have a new plant that requires so many men fewer to serve it."

The man stood, cap in hand, hardly knowing what to say, and fearing to say it; but, encouraged by the others who looked out at him from behind the machines and the piles of goods, he followed Charles, and said: "And what is to become of us then?"

"Look out for work to do elsewhere. Only those remain who have been with us a long time."

"Why, we have been here for three years!"

"I have no suggestion to make," Borowiecki answered dryly. "The new plant will work in your place and not re-

quire you. Still, something new may occur before the first. Perhaps we may enlarge our bleachery." And he went to the elevator, which at once took him out of sight.

The men looked at one another in silence and dismay, thinking of the morrow, a day of unemployment and of misery.

"Call these machines? They are curses—hell-hounds!" a man hissed, kicking at one of them with intense hatred.

"The goods are ready!" the foreman cried.

The man hurriedly donned his cap, and set to take the red flannelette out of the calender with the precision of an automaton.

CHAPTER III



THE restaurant of the Victoria Hotel was full of people.

Several large rooms, with low ceilings in stucco painted to imitate wood, were filled with noise and uproar.

The brass bars which protected the glazed entrance doors resounded continually as these swung open to let in a customer, who disappeared at once in the throng and the smoke-mist that the restaurant was full of. The electric lights in the great bar-saloon throbbed and winked every now and then; the gas-burners that were flaming at the same time cast a flickering nebulous light over the people who sat in crowds at the many tables adorned with white napery.

"Waiter, the bill!"

"Some beer!"

"Waiter, beer!"

Such were the calls that rang through the rooms, together with the dull drumming of tankards pounding on the tables.

The waiters, in evening coats sorely stained with grease, and wielding napkins as dirty as dish-clouts, were rushing about in every direction, and their soiled shirt-fronts flashed past the heads of the beer-drinkers.

More and more guests came in, the hubbub grew more deafening, and cries of: "*Lodzër Zeitung!*" and "*Kurjer Codzienny!*" pierced the air, as the news-boys pushed on amongst the chairs.

"Here, you! the *Lodzër Zeitung!*" Moritz shouted.

He looked through the paper, often glancing impatiently at the door; he was expecting Charles. At last he got up,

having caught sight of a familiar face in the next room.

"You, Leo! when did you arrive?"

"This very morning."

"How have you been getting on this season?" Moritz asked, taking a seat by his side on a green-upholstered sofa.

"Splendidly!" Leo exclaimed, stretching out his feet on a chair, and unbuttoning his waistcoat.

"I was thinking of you this very day, and talking of you to Boroviecki last evening."

"To Boroviecki, Bucholc's manager?"

"The same."

"Still printing those cotton stuffs? I heard he meant starting something of his own."

"That's just why we came to talk of you."

"Oh! Is it wool?"

"No, cotton."

"Only?"

"At present there's no saying."

"Money at hand?"

"There will be. Meanwhile there's credit, which is better."

"Is he your partner?"

"Yes, with Max Baum; do you know him?"

"Oh dear! there's something wrong here.—I mean Boroviecki," he added after a pause.

"But why?"

"The man's a 'Polachok,' " said Leo, using a Russian nickname for a Pole; and he stretched himself out at full length over sofa and chair.

Moritz laughed at him. "You don't know the man a bit. Everybody in Lodz will soon be talking about him. I believe in him as in myself: he'll make a great fortune."

"And Baum: what of him?"

"He's an ox. Requires to sleep and talk his fill, and get his work to do; but he's not a fool at all. You too might help us a good deal, and gain not a little besides. Krongold has already offered to deal with us."

"Go to Krongold, he's a big fish. Knows no end of petty traders, who buy stuffs of him—each for a hundred roubles

a year. Yes, he's a big traveller, known from Kutno to Skierniewice.—Do business with him by all means. I don't care to interfere, I have something to sell already. Why, I've by me a letter from Bucholc, who wants me as his agent for all the East! And the terms he offers—what terms!" Here he hastily began to look through every pocket for the letter in question.

"I know, I know," Moritz answered; "yesterday Boroviecki was telling me how he had recommended you to Bucholc."

"Boroviecki, indeed? What did he do that for?"

"Because he is a shrewd man who thinks of the future."

"Is that so?—Well, I think he might get a good deal by starting the business. I would willingly put twenty thousand into it on the spot.—How much money has he? for I really know nothing about him, so to speak."

"He will tell you himself how much he has. I can only say that he is not going to accept ready money."

"A Polish noble!" Leo murmured in scornful pity, expectorating into the middle of the room.

"Not at all. He is simply a better business man than any agent or traveller in all east Europe," Moritz answered, tapping his tankard with his knife. "Have you sold very much?" he went on.

"Some thousands of roubles' worth: over ten thousand in cash, the rest in bills of exchange of the very best—payable in four months, signature Safonoff. First-class business," and he patted Moritz on the knee, with joy at the very thought of it.

"And I too have an order for you. See what a friend I am?"

"To what amount?"

"Three thousand roubles in all."

"Long credit or short? Bill of exchange or C.O.D.?"

"C.O.D. I'll hand it over at once," said Moritz; and he set to look through a very large pocket-book with a lock to it.

"How much for yourself?" Leo asked.

"If cash down, one per cent will do; as between friends."

"Got payments to make; short of cash just now; will pay up in a week."

"All right, here's the order.—Ah, excuse me, I'm back at once," Moritz cried, starting up and going towards a thickset German who had just come in and was looking round the room.

"Good day, Herr Müller!"

"Good day, how are you?" the other returned absently, still gazing round him.

"If you are looking for anyone, I might be of use," Moritz continued, bent on forcing himself upon the new-comer.

"I'm looking for Mr. Boroviecki. I came in here for no one else."

"Oh, he'll be here presently: I'm expecting him myself. Please be seated here.—This is my good acquaintance, Leo Cohn"; and he introduced him.

"I am Müller!" the other remarked, rather haughtily, but sitting down.

"Is there a child in all Lodz that does not know your name?" Leo said hastily, buttoning himself up in a great hurry, and making room for Müller on the sofa.

Müller smiled condescendingly, and glanced towards the door. Boroviecki was just coming in, and not alone; but on seeing him, the "Cotton King," he left his companions at the door, and advanced, hat in hand, all the crowd in the restaurant looking on the while and watching the man with mingled dislike, envy, and admiration.

"Why, I almost had to wait for you!" Müller observed. "We must have a business talk together."

With a nod to Moritz and Leo, and a smile to the men crowding on all sides, he put his arm, German fashion, round Charles's waist, and walked out.

"I phoned to your factory, but was told you had left earlier than usual this evening."

"Very sorry indeed," Boroviecki answered politely.

"I even wrote to you myself," Müller added in a louder key and with great self-assurance, though it was a known fact

to all the town that he could hardly write his own name.

"I have not been home yet, so I could not get your letter, sir."

"I wrote about what I gave you a hint of already, Mr. Boroviecki; I am a plain man, and tell you again simply: come over to me, and you shall have two thousand more pay."

"Bucholc," Charles returned coolly, "if I stay with him, is ready to pay me as much as you."

"But I'll give you three—no, four thousand more! Four thousand roubles: do you hear? A pretty good salary: fourteen thousand a year!"

"Your proposal, sir, is magnificent, and I am truly grateful, but unable to accept it."

"Then you are staying with Bucholc?"

"I am not. To speak quite frankly, I neither accept your offer nor stay with Bucholc, because I am starting a factory myself."

Müller stopped short, drew back a step, looked Charles in the face, and asked in a lower and more respectful tone: "Is it wool?"

"I can only tell you, sir, that there will not be any sort of competition between us."

"Oh, I don't trouble about competition in the least!" Müller exclaimed, slapping his pocket. "How can you or anybody harm me? With my millions taking my part?"

Boroviecki was silent, smiling to himself with a far-away look.

"Well, what sort of goods are you to go in for?" Müller again inquired, putting his arm round Charles's waist.

They were thus walking together along the well-worn asphalt-paved side-way, and passing through the courtyard of a hotel to a theatre built at the very end of it and lit up by a great electric sign.

People were going in in large numbers. The coaches and carriages had pulled up outside the hotel, letting out men of rotund proportions for the most part, and overdressed,

heavily cloaked women, walking over the wet pavement with open umbrellas; for though the rain had ceased, a thick, clammy drizzle still came down.

"I like you, Mr. Borowiecki," Müller said without waiting for his former question to be answered; "so much that, as soon as ever the smash comes, you will find a situation with me, and some thousand roubles of salary."

"So you'd pay me better now than then?"

"I should. You're worth more to me now, you see."

"Many thanks for your plain speaking," Charles replied, sarcastically.

"I had no intention to offend you; but I always say what I think," said Müller, who had noticed the other's somewhat bitter smile, and was eager to set himself right.

"You do.—Well, if I come to a smash once, that will only teach me how not to do so again."

"Mr. Borowiecki, you have a good head on your shoulders, and I like you amazingly. Together we might do splendid things."

"Ah well, we shall have to do them apart," Charles said with a smile, making a low bow to some ladies who passed by.

"Polish girls?" Müller queried. "They are pretty; but so is my Mada too."

"She is—very," Charles replied, with a serious glance at him.

"Ah!—an idea strikes me—— But you shall know it another time," Müller said with an air of mystery.—"Have you a ticket for the play?"

"I have—sent me a fortnight ago."

"There will be only three people in my box."

"Any ladies?"

"They went in before me; I stayed to see you, but you disappointed me. So long! But I say, you'll come round to us, won't you?"

"To be sure; and a very pleasant duty it will be."

Müller went in, and Charles returned to the restaurant. Moritz had left, but told a waiter to say he would meet him at the theatre. Charles went there, to find himself in the

first row of orchestra seats, seated between Moritz and Leo. The latter was assiduously bowing to a certain fair-haired damsel on the first floor, and staring at her through an opera-glass.

"A beauty of the first water she is, this golden girl of mine. Just look at her, Moritz!"

"Are you intimate with her?"

"Am I intimate? Ha ha! Oh yes, very much so indeed!—Just introduce me to Boroviecki, will you?"

This Moritz at once did. Leo was about to make some remark, and had already begun with his usual gesture—slapping Moritz on the knee—when Boroviecki stood up, facing the audience that completely filled the theatre and formed the very best public in all Lodz; and he proceeded to survey it carefully, often saluting the occupiers of a box or a stall with a wonderfully graceful bend of the head.

Very tranquilly, too, did he stand the fire of binocles and opera-glasses directed on him from every part of the theatre, which hummed like a beehive filled with a fresh swarm. His tall, lithe, and well-developed figure stood out to perfection from where he stood. His handsome face and characteristically delicate features, adorned with a fine well-trimmed moustache, and set off by a firm, strongly marked lower jaw, together with the careless ease of all his motions and glances, denoted him as a typical "gentleman." Who could possibly, seeing his fashionable exterior, have guessed him to be a man unrivalled in his specialty, as a first-class manufacturing chemist and connoisseur in colouring matters; one whom all the cotton factories were struggling to get hold of; one who in his department had really made revolutions? In the expression of the man's bluish-grey eyes, of his sharply cut lineaments, of his strongly chiselled forehead, there seemed to be something of a bird or beast of prey. Indomitable inexorable will breathed from out every inch of him.

Somewhat haughtily he let his eyes wander over the brilliantly illuminated theatre, and the gaily attired public that thronged it, sparkling with jewels and diamonds. The boxes looked like balconies covered with cherry-coloured velvet,

from which (so many flowers, as it were) there looked out ladies splendidly attired and blazing with precious gems.

"Charles!" Moritz whispered low; "how many millions, think you, are in this theatre to-night?"

"Two hundred or so," was the whispered reply, as Boroviecki looked round upon those well-known faces—all millionaires!

"In here there is an aroma of millions," Leo put in, who was inhaling the air, redolent with perfumes, with the scent of fresh flowers—and of the mud brought in from the street.

"An aroma? Rather a stench of onions and the smell of potatoes," Boroviecki muttered disparagingly, whilst bowing with a pleasant smile to an extremely good-looking Jewess in a low-cut black silk dress that set off the dazzling whiteness of her dainty shoulders and of her neck, on which a necklace of brilliants was sparkling. Brilliants, too, gleamed above her brow, in the combs that kept in order her thick, black, soft hair, dressed Empire fashion, and in her ears, from which were suspended diamonds of unusual size; brilliants shone in her corsage, in the clasp of her waist-belt, and in the bracelets on her arms, sheathed in long, black gloves. Her eyes—long, large ovals between their lids—glowed like sapphires of the deepest violet-blue. Her face was of a warm olive hue, not without tints of dark red; she had a low forehead, strongly marked eyebrows, a classic nose, and rather full, large lips.

She gazed persistently at Boroviecki, heedless of the many people whose glasses were levelled at her on all sides; but from time to time she cast a seemingly inadvertent look at her husband, who sat a little behind her: an old man of a strongly pronounced Semitic type, whose head, heavy with his thoughts, was drooping over his chest, but who now and again would wake up a little, and darting a keen glance round at the audience, draw his waistcoat down over a protuberant paunch, and say in a whisper: "Lucy, why are you leaning forwards so?"

But she would feign not to have heard him, and continue surveying boxes and seats, all chock-full of people, mostly

of a German or Semitic type; or else stare at Charles, who must have noticed her interest, since he frequently turned towards her; yet he remained outwardly cold and indifferent.

"That wife of Zuker's— A pretty piece of goods, isn't she?" Leo said *sotto voce* to Boroviecki, with whom he wanted to strike up a conversation, to worm out of the man some more particulars concerning the agency offered to him.

"Oh, do you think so?" replied the other frigidly.

"I think so, because I have eyes. Look at her figure: that's what I care for in a woman. Oh, she has a first-class *gorge*, soft as velvet— Ha ha ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" Moritz inquired.

"I have just made a most excellent joke." And he told it over again, with another guffaw.

Silence followed, for the curtain had risen, and the eyes of all the spectators were now fixed on the stage, with the exception of Zuker's wife, who continued to gaze at Boroviecki from behind her fan, though he seemed to be taking no notice of her. She was evidently annoyed at this, for she more than once shut her fan and impatiently struck the top of the box-front with it.

He, after a faint smile and a momentary look in her direction, proceeded to give the whole of his attention to the stage, whereon a lot of male and female amateurs were giving parodies of real dramatic art.

It was indeed nothing but a mere charity performance, consisting of the efforts of two comic actresses, one solo singer, a piano-player, and a violinist, and some *tableaux vivants* to wind up with.

During an interlude Boroviecki got up, intending to go round to the Müllers. Cohn sought to detain him.

"Mr. Boroviecki, I want to have a talk with you. . . . Oh! What a very great man! 'No time now!'"

"He's quite right. This is not the place for business."

"Moritz, are you going quite silly? How can you? There's always time for business. Only your Boroviecki, Grand Duke of Bucholc and Company—he's too grand a fellow for us!"

Charles had meanwhile entered Müller's box. Müller went out to make more room for him; a short fat German was occupying the fourth seat.

Charles saluted Mrs. Müller, who was dozing in a corner, and bowed to her daughter, who had risen as soon as he entered.

"Störch."

"Boroviecki."

The interchange of names was followed by a handshake. Charles took a seat.

"How do you like the play, Miss Müller?"

"Oh, very much—perfectly," she cried. Her round rosy face, not unlike a young radish newly washed, turned a deeper red, which her bright-green dress made still redder.

Ashamed of her blushes, she covered her face with a handkerchief to hide them.

Her mother, to protect her from a draught (the theatre doorway stood open), threw a tissue of priceless lace over the girl's shoulders, and then went back to her seat and dozed again.

"And you?" Miss Müller asked after a while, raising her eyes, which exactly resembled blue chinaware, and had a fringe of golden lashes. With her childlike lips, slightly parted, and her tiny face raised to his, she somehow put him in mind of a roll freshly baked!

"Well, I can say the same as you. Perfectly—very much! or else very much—perfectly."

"They play beautifully, don't they?"

"Yes—for amateurs.—I expected you would have been among them."

"I should have liked to, very much; but I was not asked," she replied, with a note of deep regret in her voice.

"They intended doing so, but were afraid of being refused; besides, it's as hard to get into your house as into the court of a king."

Here Störch put in: "Ya, ya! I said the same to Miss Mada."

"Then you might have let me know, since you are on visiting terms with us."

"I was busy and forgot," was the outspoken excuse.

To this there was no reply.

Störch coughed and leant forward to make some observation, but withheld it, seeing Boroviecki's eyes wandering about the theatre with a bored expression. As for Mada, she felt embarrassed. She wished exceedingly to talk; and now, when he sat by her side, and opera-glasses were levelled at them both from every box with special interest, she had no word to say! At last she tried.

"Are you not to belong to our firm?"

"Unfortunately, no; I have had to decline your father's offer."

"Oh! And Papa made so sure of you."

"I am exceedingly sorry."

"I hoped you would be at our house on Thursday; I wanted to beg you to do me a favour."

"Perhaps it could be managed, if you would tell me now."

He bent his head down to her, whilst looking hard at the Zukers' family box.

Lucy was fanning herself excitedly, and evidently in hot discussion behind her fan with her husband, who now and again pulled down his waistcoat and sat bolt upright.

"I wanted," said Mada, "to get from you a list of Polish books to read. I asked Papa, but he said I was silly, and ought to mind the house and take up housekeeping."

"Ya, ya, so he did," Störch once more put in; but he drew back before Boroviecki's look, fixed upon him.

"And why do you wish to read Polish? What do you want this list for?" Charles inquired rather curtly.

But she answered, with sudden boldness: "Because I do; I wish it, and am asking to be informed."

"But your brother must surely have a library in your new mansion?"

She shook with hearty but suppressed laughter.

"Why do you laugh at my supposition, please?"

"Why, because Wilhelm has such a dislike for books! One day he quarrelled with me about them and burnt all mine while I was in town with Mamma."

"Ya, ya! Wilhelm likes no books; Wilhelm—good lad!"

Boroviecki surveyed Störch coldly, then said to Mada: "Good. You shall have a list of the titles to-morrow."

"And suppose I wanted it right now?"

"Right now I can give you only some titles; you will get the rest to-morrow."

"Oh, how kind you are!" she said in great joy, but blushed like a peony, perceiving the ironical smile that curled his lips.

Having written a few titles on his card, embellished with his coat of arms, he bowed and went out.

In the passage he met with old Shaya Mendelsohn, a real "Cotton King," who was usually called Shaya simply.

This was a tall, raw-boned Hebrew, white-bearded like a patriarch, and clad in a long, common gaberdine that swept his heels.

The man was always wherever he supposed Herman Bucholc to be—Bucholc, his greatest rival in the realm of cotton, the biggest manufacturer in all Lodz, and his personal enemy into the bargain.

He stood in Boroviecki's way. Charles raised his hat and would have passed on; but Shaya accosted him.

"Greetings!—Herman is not here to-night: wherefore?" he inquired in most fearful Polish.

"Don't know," Charles said laconically. He could not bear the man.

"Farewell!" the other returned contemptuously.

Without answering at all, Charles made his way to a box on the first floor, where quite a bevy of ladies were assembled, with Moritz and Horn in their midst. There was very little room in the box, but merriment in plenty.

"Our little girl plays splendidly, doesn't she, Mr. Boroviecki?"

"Indeed she does. What a pity I have not brought a nose-gay for her!"

"We have one ready; she will get it when the second piece is over."

"I see, ladies, you are merry enough—and crowded enough—without my help: so I'm off."

"Stay, stay; we shall be all the merrier," pleaded one of them, in a pale gown, with a pale face, and pale-blue eyes.

"Not merrier, surely," Moritz exclaimed, "but surely more crowded."

"I accordingly withdraw to leave you less so."

"If I might accompany you to Müller's box, I should go too."

"That I can manage for you."

Horn then said his word. "But I am going too; so you will have more room directly." He did not, though; a pleading look from a maiden in a front seat persuaded him to stay on.

"Do you know, Miss Mary," someone asked, "how much that Müller girl is worth? Why, fifty thousand roubles a year!"

"That *is* going strong," Moritz remarked. "To my mind, she's a business certainly worth having and holding."

"Come closer, Mr. Boroviecki, and I'll tell you something," the pale lady said in an undertone, bending her head so low that her dark silky hair brushed Charles's hair as he turned round to her. Screening herself with her fan, she whispered to him for some time.

"No plotting here!" a lady called out to them, the oldest person in the box, who ruled there supreme; a woman with something bizarre in her appearance, something "baroque style"—beautiful, forty-odd, with a dazzling complexion, hair quite grey, though uncommonly luxuriant, jet-black eyes, eyebrows ditto, and a dignified, commanding mien.

"Mrs. Stephanie was only relating a few interesting particulars about the new baroness."

"But such as she would hardly tell in public," the baroque lady observed.

"Oh see! Miss Mada Müller is condescending to look upon us!"

"To-night she is for all the world like a fat gosling, plucked, and garnished with parsley sprigs."

"To-night," Horn muttered, "Mme Stephanie is trying to be malicious."

"Or see that Shaya girl now, with a whole shop-windowful of jewellery on her."

"Yes, but then she could well afford to sport two whole shop-windows!" Moritz struck in, fixing his glasses on his nose, and looking down to the Mendelsohns' box, where the youngest daughter, arrayed with the utmost magnificence, sat with her father and another girl.

"That—that lame creature—who is she?"

"The red-haired one do you mean? She is Rose."

"She was in a shop with me yesterday, turning everything topsyturvy, and buying nothing at all. So she went off, but I had a good look at her; she's a fright."

"She's lovely, she's an angel.—What? an angel? No—four—no, fifteen angels put together!" Moritz bawled, mimicking old Shaya.

"Then good-night, ladies," Charles said. "Come, Moritz, and leave Horn to the smiles of the fair."

"Won't you come over to take tea with us, after the performance?"

"Many thanks, but that must be to-morrow night; to-night I cannot."

"What, must you dance attendance at the Müllers'?" the pale Stephanie queried, not without a shade of tartness.

"At the Grand Hotel. It is Saturday, and Kurovski is to meet me as usual. We must confer together on matters of the highest importance."

"Settle them here, then; he is surely here."

"Why, don't you know that the man never enters a theatre?"

So he bowed and withdrew, followed to the door by an enigmatical glance from Mrs. Stephanie.

The curtain had risen some time since, so he went back to

his seat. But there was no listening to the play: mysterious whispers were circulating all around him.

Everyone had been struck to see that Knoll, the son-in-law of Bucholc, who had sat alone in his box, had been sent for during the performance, and that a little later Grosplik, the biggest banker in Lodz, had slipped quietly out of the theatre. He had got a wire, and was hurrying off to Shaya.

These whispered details passed quick as lightning from mouth to mouth, filling the directors of many a firm with a feeling of vague unaccountable disquietude. All wondered what the matter could be, but as yet no one knew.

The women indeed attended to the performance; but the men for the most part, whether in boxes or in the pit, turned uneasy eyes towards the king and the kinglets of Lodz. Mendelsohn was sitting crouched forwards, spectacles on forehead, now and then stroking his snowy beard with a splendid gesture, and apparently absorbed in the play that was going on. Knoll, the omnipotent Knoll, Bucholc's son and his successor, also listened most attentively. And Müller too could certainly have heard of nothing, for he was roaring with laughter at the actors' jokes, so boisterously that Mada occasionally ventured a faint remonstrance.

"Papa—so loud!—You mustn't."

"I've paid for my fun, and I'll have it!" he would retort; and in truth he enjoyed himself immensely.

Zuker had disappeared; Lucy sat solitary in the box, with her eyes once more fixed upon Charles.

The lesser potentates and the representatives of such firms as Ende-Grenspan, Wolkman, Bauvecel, Fitze, Biberstein, Pinchovsky, Prusak, and Stojovsky, were fidgeting about in their places, ever more and more restless; and as fresh waves of whispered news came rolling in over the theatre, one or another of them would go out and not come back.

Scrutinizing eyes were looking everywhere; questions passed from man to man; the sense of disquietude grew more and more strong. Though everybody felt sure that something important had taken place, no one could tell why he was sure.

Slowly this uneasy feeling spread even to those who could fear no bad news. They, like the others, felt that warning seismic thrill under Lodz, subsequently—and so often of late!—visited by a cataclysm.

Only in the high places—the cheap ones—nothing wrong was noticed; there the fun and merriment was as great as ever; there vociferous laughter was still heard, and loud applause, and noisy cheers filled the air. The jovial uproar, pouring from those upper tiers, fell in sounding cascades down to the pit and boxes, and upon the heads and into the minds of the men so unexpectedly troubled—upon those man-millions who lolled there, stretched out on velvet, bedecked with diamonds, puffed up with grandeur and with power.

"It's the cotton men that are hit!" Leo observed to Boroviecki. "See there: the wool-traders and the rest of them are at ease, so to speak; only rather curious. Oh, I know all about that!"

"Frumkin of Bialystok, Lihacheff of Rostoff, Alpasoff of Odessa—all smashed!" So said Moritz, who had gleaned the information somewhere or other.

"How much does Lodz stand to lose?" Charles asked.

Moritz slipped out, to return in a few minutes, much paler than before, his features strangely distorted, his eyes glittering strangely; he was so much moved that he could not keep his glasses on, do what he would.

"One more: Rogopulo of Odessa.—All those firms as solid as stone walls!"

"Is the loss very great?"

"Lodz is in for two millions!" he said in deep concern, while striving to fix his glasses on his nose.

"This cannot be!" Boroviecki cried, almost shouted, and he started to his feet; at which the public behind him proceeded to thump the floor and to hiss, as they could not see the stage for him.

"But who has told you this?"

"Landau. When Landau speaks, Landau knows."

"And who are the losers?"

"Pretty nearly all of us; but Kessler, Bucholc, and Müller are hardest hit."

"But why has no one intervened? Why has this crash not been prevented?"

"Rogopulo has absconded; Lihacheff is dead: in despair—took poison."

"What of Frumkin and Alpasoff?"

"Don't know. Can only tell you what has been wired."

By this time the news had spread throughout the audience, and everybody now knew of the disaster. Every instant the emotion produced by the tidings was manifest here and there like the explosion of a bomb. There were faces raised to heaven, eyes that sparkled, harsh words that flew about in the air, chairs lifted up and brought down again with a crash; men, too, rushing away in hot haste to wire or phone. And soon the theatre was far from full.

Boroviecki felt greatly upset by this news. Though he lost nothing, yet those around him had lost.

"And your firm?" he inquired of Max Baum, who had caught sight of an empty stall, and sat down by Charles.

"Do you lose nothing?"

"There is nothing that we can lose—except honour; and that kind of property is not on the market in Lodz," Max replied satirically.

Around them the people who thronged the place were talking eagerly.

"Lodz is in hot water now!"

"A season of *burning* heat will follow."

"And the fire brigade will be hard at work!"

"Well, warm weather means that spring is at hand."

"You may laugh your fill: laughter costs nothing."

"The way of the world! Half of us get their necks wrung, the rest fill their pockets."

"Who comes best out of it?"

"Why, Bucholc, Kessler, and Müller."

"Those men, come what may, are never down."

"Devil take the fellows! what good is it to me—and what harm—whether they keep their money or lose it?"

Thus questions and remarks were bandied about, with sneering jests, statements of figures, conjectures, and looks that seemed to gloat over the ruin of others.

"Mayer's liabilities, I hear, amount to not less than a hundred thousand roubles."

"Good for him: when he has sold his horses and must go on foot, his belly will shrink a bit, and he'll not need a Marienbad cure."

"Lots of family jewels will be sold cheap now."

"This will finish Wolkman off: for some time he has gone only half-speed."

"Now, Robert, ask for his daughter's hand; you'll not be turned down."

"Let her wait!"

Such was the talk of the mob: but the "kings" sat on, serene and unruffled.

Shaya never took his eyes off the singer. When she had done, he was the first to clap his hands. Then he said a word in Rose's ear, with an imperceptible sign towards Knoll, who, leaning forwards from his box, was nodding towards Boroviecki.

As soon as the interlude began, Charles went round to him.

"Have you heard?"

"I have." And he proceeded to name firm after firm.

"That's of no account."

"Of no account? Why, Lodz alone has to pay two millions."

"Of no account to *us*. Bauer was round here but now: he says it comes to no more than fifteen thousand."

"To half a million, from what folk say."

"That's the amount of Shaya's loss—and he says it's ours!"

"At any rate, Lodz will have to suffer awfully; firms will be bursting like bubbles."

"Let them burst! To us it matters nothing," he drawled carelessly, eyeing his exquisitely manicured hands, and contemplating semi-consciously and with half-closed eyelids the scintillating brilliants set in a ring on his left hand.

"I tell you this, not as to an employee, but as to a friend.—Do you know of anyone whom this crash is sure to ruin?"

"Scarcely anyone has been named positively."

"It does not matter; plenty will have to go; to-morrow we shall know who they are.—A merry Sunday to them!"

"This is a great disaster."

"For our firm, no. Think on whom the blow falls: on the cotton-dealers. Now, who can resist the blow? Only we, Shaya, and a few more. All our shoddy competitors, half ruined already, will presently be quite so; they have destroyed each other. So we shall for a while be more at ease. We shall make some of those new goods which they made formerly, and as a consequence sell as much more.—But all that is no concern of ours. If they go under, let them; if they resort to arson, they may; if they take to swindling, swindling let it be. We shall stand firm. It is of slight moment; there are things of much more import. You will see soon—oh, very, very soon—that half of the cotton works must come to a standstill."

Boroviecki looked at him, while listening—not very patiently, indeed. He disliked Knoll for the man's inordinate pride, bred in him by the millions he possessed.

He had come in for most of his father-in-law's property, was the best-educated man in the whole set of money-makers, well-bred and of pleasant intercourse; but also the most inexorable and the most grasping of men, using without mercy all the people and all the influence within his power.

"Come and dine with us to-morrow," he said; "I invite you for father's name-day.—Now please tell me the time. I can't look at my watch, or people would think me in a hurry to be off."

"Eleven in a few minutes."

"When does the express train leave for Warsaw?"

"At half past twelve."

"Then there's still time. I must now tell you why all these tidings about failures, about Lodz losing two millions, and so on, matter so little to me. The fact is that news of far

more importance has come in.—I am aware that I am speaking to a gentleman?"

"I suppose you are, but fail to see the connexion——"

"You shall directly. You are a friend of ours, and we shall never forget what we owe to you in the printing department. Let me tell you that we got news from Petersburg about some business of very great moment, only an hour ago: business such that—that I must go there instantly, and absolutely in secret."

He had concluded hurriedly, without telling Charles what he had intended to say. This reticence arose from a look of cold distrust in Boroviecki's eyes, that penetrated to his very soul. He moved uneasily in his place, and threw a glance at the opposite box.

"That wife of Zuker's is a handsome woman," he remarked.

"Her diamonds are handsome," was the answer.

"So you'll go to old Bucholc's to-morrow?"

"Oh, without fail."

"He's got something special to talk over with you.—Well, good-bye. See you again in a few days.—But not a word of this, Mr. Boroviecki."

"Not one syllable."

Charles withdrew with a sense of disappointment. Knoll had most certainly not told him all.

"What can that news be? Why must he go? What is it he has concealed from me, and why?" He wondered, but to no purpose, and lost himself in a maze of guesses and surmises.

He left before the curtain went down, but when outside, turned back and made for Mrs. Zuker's box.

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said reproachfully, fixing her wonderful eyes full upon him.

"Is such a thing possible?"

"With you, everything is possible."

"You judge me by what my enemies—and friends—say."

"No matter what they say; I saw you go."

"But I returned, I was forced to return."

"To the theatre? Ah, I see: you had forgotten something."

"To you, madam."

"Did you?" she asked slowly, her eyes ablaze with pleasure. "Never yet did you say such a thing to me."

"But this many a month I have longed to."

Her gaze was like a kiss upon his face, and he seemed to feel her warm breath on his lips.

"You were talking of me down there in the stalls with Mr. Welt. Yes, I know you were."

"We were talking about your jewels."

"No one in Lodz has anything like such beauties, eh?"

"No one but Mrs. Knoll and the Baroness," he returned, with a malicious smile.

"And what else did you talk about?"

"About your beauty, madam."

"Now you are laughing at me."

"I cannot laugh at what I love," he said in a stifled voice, taking hold of her hand, that hung down. She drew it back at once, looking at him with dilated eyes, then round her as if all the audience had heard.

"Good-bye, madam," he continued, rising; angry with himself, sure that he had made a blunder, and unable to explain how he could have brought matters so quickly to a point without any preliminaries, unless by the fact that she had intoxicated him.

"No. We shall go together, and at once," she said quickly. Putting on her scarf, and taking up her fan and her box of sweets, she walked out.

In the cloak-room she put her things on without a word. Borowiecki was also quite speechless—unable to find aught to say. He could only take note of those eyes of hers, with their ever-varying expression; of her neck and shoulders, so exquisitely shaped; of those lips, over which her tongue would pass again and yet again; and of her figure, a bright dream of perfection.

She put her hat on, and he wrapped her cloak about her. As she bent somewhat back to fold herself in it, her hair at that moment touched his lips. He recoiled slightly, as from a flame, and left her unsupported, so that she fell on

to his bosom with her back turned. He instantly seized her in his arms, and pressed his lips to the nape of her neck, which stiffened and writhed under that devouring kiss.

Uttering a faint cry, she for an instant leaned upon him with such force that he tottered beneath her weight. The next, she freed herself from his embrace. Pale as marble, she gasped for breath; her eyes blazed under half-closed lids.

"Take me to my carriage," she said to Charles, looking away.

"To the very end of the world, if you will."

"Button my gloves."

He did so, but could hardly find either buttonholes or buttons, and was still less able to catch her eyes, purposely turned from him. One of her shoulders was pressed close to the wall; her head was averted. She stood thus, her hand in his, her bright crimson lips curved in an odd smile, and a shudder now and then passing through her frame. At such moments, she would press closer to the wall, while something like a shadow of dread crept over her face, and twitched the corners of her mouth.

"Come then," he whispered, as soon as her gloves were buttoned.

He led her to the carriage, and taking her hand, kissed it passionately, with these words: "Forgive me, madam! By all that's sacred, I implore you."

She made no answer, but instead pulled him into the carriage with such strength that he stumbled in unconsciously, slamming the door behind him.

The horses started off at a quick trot.

Boroviecki was wrought up to the highest pitch by all this. He had no time at all for reflection, nor indeed was he able at that moment to think of anything but the fact of her being at his side. She, however, sat at a distance, huddled up in a corner; he could only hear the quick intakes of her agitated breathing; or sometimes, as a lamp-post swept by, he caught a glimpse of her face and of those great luminous eyes of hers, staring into vacancy.

He strove to be master of himself. He wanted to stop the coachman; his hands mechanically sought the handle of the door, to open it and jump out into the street. But he could not: he no longer had either the will or the power.

She sat mute, closely wrapped up in her long mantle, as if seeking to keep herself apart from him—or perhaps to resist a mad desire to leap into his arms?

"Will you forgive me?" he said once more, lowering his voice, creeping closer to her, and trembling all over. She made no answer. Then he whispered low, as if from the depths of his being: "O Lucy! Lucy!"

A shudder went through all her body, she shook the mantle from her shoulders, and with a low cry flung herself trembling upon his bosom.

"I love, I love you!" she moaned, embracing him with the utmost intensity of passion.

Their lips met in a long, long kiss, as strong as death.

"I love, I love you!" she repeated, delightedly reiterating the honey-sweet words, as she kissed his face in triumphant rapture. "No, say nothing more now—I want to speak—to cry out for ever: 'I love you!'—I'd repeat the words in the face of the whole world!—I know that others love you too—I know you are betrothed.—What's that to me?—I love you!—Not that you may love me back again—that I may be happy in your love; not for that!—I love you—and nothing more.—If you wish it, I'll kneel at your feet—and repeat it from my heart till you believe me and begin to love me in your turn—I cannot pretend any longer; I cannot live any longer without love—and without you to love!—You are my only one, my lord; and you I love!"

The words came welling up fast, wildly, incoherently, as she now flung her cloak aside, and now wrapped it around her, now drawing away from him, and then once more, silent but radiant, embracing and hugging him hard, with kiss upon kiss.

Boroviecki, swept off his feet by such a frenzied outbreak of passion, and enthralled by the intense fiery love thrill-

ing in her voice and burning in her hot kisses, was vanquished by his feelings and as much beside himself as she was.

Her kisses were returned with such ardour that she more than once lay swooning in his embrace.

"I love you, Lucy! Oh, how I love you!"

"No words—kisses only!" she would then cry out in ecstasy.

Her voice, at times swelling and bursting forth tempestuously, and then subsiding into sobs, sounded full of the tenderness of the enamoured Orient, and melodious as an inspired canticle of love.

"Oh, how I have dreamed of this moment! for how many months have I longed for you! For how many years have I waited—waited in sorrow! Oh, kiss me—kiss me with all your might and main!—Ah!" she cried wildly, "I'd willingly die this very instant!"

The carriage rolled on, wending its way along one of the unpaved streets of the town, horribly deep in mud. There was in all the street not so much as one lamp; only the carriage lanterns moved their circles of golden light over the mobile layers of deep liquid mire, spirting up even on to the carriage window-panes.

No one was walking or driving on the road, bordered on either side by high garden walls, beyond which rose huge piles of timber, standing four-square, or the tall chimney of some factory, of which there was no lack in that quarter. The large dogs that guarded the warehouses barked furiously at the carriage as it passed by; they were heard dashing in their rage against the gates, and scrabbling at the fences that would not let them out into the street.

But they in the carriage saw nothing, heard nothing, engulfed as they were by the unexpected billow which had carried them away and made them blind to all things.

"Lucy?"

"Kiss me!"

"Dost love?"

"Kiss me!"

And no words but such as these burst from their hearts, now brimming with white-hot lava.

"Oh, take me, Charles! let me be yours entirely and for ever!"

Even when they arrived, they could not realize that they were there.

Zuker's mansion stood close to a grove that belonged to the town.

"Come in—come to me," she murmured, holding him fast by the hand.

Instinctively and as a matter of course, Charles's other hand went to the pocket where his revolver lay.

"Augustus, you are to wait for this gentleman," was her order to the coachman.

"Come. There is no one in. *He*" (with a stress on the pronoun) "has gone on a journey. No one is at home but our servants."

She let go his hand, for the front door was swinging open.

"Light up the eastern sitting-room, and bring us tea directly."

No sooner had the servant withdrawn than she threw her arms round Boroviecki's neck, and, kissing him passionately, pushed him into a sort of lobby, carpeted and hung with red.

"Love, I am coming instantly!" she cried, and disappeared.

He slowly took off his overcoat, slipped his revolver into his coat pocket, and, going to a door, which opened to let him pass, entered a dimly lighted boudoir. A white carpet, with a remarkably thick pile, rendered the heaviest step quite inaudible.

"What a perfectly romantic adventure!" Charles said to himself, dropping down upon a stool of Persian make—ebony inlaid with gold and silver patterns. He felt extremely tired and worn out.

"She's a strange woman, and a strange scene this is!" he thought, as he looked round the room. The boudoir was fitted up with such magnificence that even in a town so filled with

first-class mansions as Lodz was, it might well elicit a cry of admiration.

The walls were hung with silken stuffs of a rich amber tint, over which, in rough embroidery, purple-hued clusters of lilac were scattered. A large, wide sofa stretched along one of the walls from end to end, beneath a yellow canopy with green stripes, draped tent-wise, and supported on golden halberds.

Just under the top of the tent a lamp of amber- and ruby- and emerald-coloured glass threw a bizarre, bewildering light all round.

"A rags-and-bones-man's shop!" Charles muttered with a sort of angry scorn; yet, irritated as he was by the gaudy splendour, he could not forbear from gazing on the odd, eccentric, and precious pieces of furniture that he saw, of Japanese fashion, huddled together in disorder, and far too many for the size of the room.

Piles of silken cushions, with crude Chinese hues, lay on the sofa and on the milk-white carpet, which they seemed to tinge like great blots of spilt colour. The fragrance of burnt amber and of *violettes de Perse*, mingled with the odour of roses, floated about the room. On one of the walls there glittered a collection of most costly Oriental weapons, grouped round a large circular shield of Saracenic steel inlaid with gold, and so brightly burnished that the golden tracery and the edgings of pale amethysts shone and sparkled in the dusky boudoir with a variegated display of light. In one corner a huge fan of peacocks' feathers formed the background to a large statue of Buddha, cross-legged and gilt all over. In another there stood a great Japanese flower-stand, borne by golden dragons, and filled with snow-white azaleas in full bloom.

"Why, this is a millionaire's lumber-room!" Charles said to himself; for besides a highly cultivated natural taste and feeling for things beautiful, he had perfected it by his special studies in colour-harmony.

"Mr. Director, Madame will receive you," said an old clean-shaven footman, bowing low, as he lifted a heavy

portière of yellow velvet, sprinkled all over with painted chrysanthemums.

Charles followed the servant into the dining-room. Lucy wasn't there yet.

Boroviecki, left alone in the dining-room, cast a look round it. It was furnished with the usual banal luxury of Lodz: oak panellings half-way up the walls; sideboards of dark walnut wood, Brittany style, with lots of silver and of chinaware on the shelves; antique stools in mediæval German fashion, splendidly carved, and set round an immense table lit by a chandelier like a bouquet of tulips, each tulip glowing with an electric bulb. Part of this table had been laid for tea.

He seated himself, having waited for some time, when he happened to notice a scrap of paper on the floor. This he picked up to lay on the table, but instinctively cast a glance at it.

It was a telegram in the Bucholc firm cipher, used only on occasions of supreme importance. Boroviecki, who knew the key, was exceedingly puzzled.

"What can this thing be doing here?"

Turning the paper, he saw it was addressed: "Bucholc—Lodz."

Scruples, he felt, were no longer in season; and he read:

"To-day Council decision.—Duty American cotton coming via Hamburg or Triest raised to 25 gold kopeks per pood.—Enforcement in fortnight.—Railway tariff transport cotton from west frontiers raised to 20 kop. per pood and verst.—Enforcement in month.—Publication in week."

Boroviecki put the paper away in his pocket, and jumped up from his chair in great excitement.

"What tremendous news! Half Lodz must go under.—Now I know why Knoll told me nothing: he did not trust me.—It is to Hamburg he is going, to purchase big stores of cotton.—He'll buy up all he possibly can and cut out all the lesser manufacturers.—A great stroke of business this!—Oh, for ready money to make purchases now! Ah!"—These

thoughts flashed through his mind, which seethed with furious impatience and unrestrained desire to make a fortune out of the news he had thus come across by mere chance. "Money! money!" he groaned in spirit, starting again from his seat.

There was a feverish glitter in his eyes, he quivered all over with excitement. His first idea was to escape from the place at once and return to town, where he could get hold of Moritz and talk the business over with him. This he might perhaps have done but for Lucy's sudden appearance and her arms thrown round his neck.

"You have had to wait. Pardon me; I was forced to change my dress from top to toe."

She kissed him, then took a seat and pointed to another quite close to her, but she now behaved calmly; for the servant had come in and was pouring out the tea.

To sit quiet, however, was impossible to her. Every now and then she would run to one of the sideboards and take thence many and multifarious condiments, which she set before Charles.

She was in a lemon-yellow tea-gown with very wide sleeves, adorned with cream-hued lace and a row of turquoises, and girt round the waist with a golden cord. Her luxuriant hair was drawn back and fastened with a broad Greek fillet and hairpins that shone bright with diamonds. The diamond necklace that she had worn at the theatre now sparkled again upon her unveiled bosom with rainbow magnificence; at times her beautiful arms peeped from her wide sleeves till her very shoulders became visible.

She was attractive beyond expression, but Boroviecki only very partially felt that attraction now. He answered her almost in monosyllables, drank his tea in haste, and only wished he could get away as soon as might be. The news he had learned was burning like fire within his brain.

Lucy, too, was in agonies of impatience, and followed the servant's deliberate movements with a look of exasperation. Unable to fall on Boroviecki's neck, she squeezed his hand so hard that he almost cried out with pain.

"What is it ails you?" she asked, seeing his embarrassment.

"My happiness!" he replied in French.

They talked together, but the conversation flagged. She was tortured by the servant's presence; he, by impatience and the necessity he was under to be sitting there, now that he knew the great secret—that the duty on cotton had risen from eight to twenty kopeks a pood!

"Shall we pass to the boudoir?" she asked, as soon as the meal was over.

She fixed him with her wonderful gleaming eyes, full of such meaning, her crimson mouth glowed with such ardent fire, that though Charles had risen merely to take his leave, he simply bowed—and followed her. Her attraction was irresistible.

When alone, she at once seized upon him with fiery impetuosity, but for one instant only. Whilst she was caressing him with a vehemence that words fail to describe—falling on her knees, hugging him fast, babbling random words in which her fondness found a vent, and, as it were, demented by the might of her passion—he was all the time thinking of that cotton business, of where he might see Moritz, of where money to make the intended purchase could be raised.

And yet he returned kiss for kiss, blandishment for blandishment, and again and again uttered speeches of burning love; but all this was done almost unconsciously, and by the power, given by custom, of saying the right thing on such occasions, rather than dictated by his heart, which just then was full of very different things indeed.

She, notwithstanding her frenzied state, and by means of that sort of intuition which the extremity of passion gives sometimes—knew there was something that kept them apart; and she all the more recklessly gave vent to her feelings, making up in herself for what failed in him; she thus set in motion all the power of enchantment possessed by an enamoured woman—a woman who would with a cry of gladness take even a blow from her lover—a woman for whom the greatest bliss lies in the conquest of him she loves,

yes, even by force, by compulsion—the compulsion of her own volcanic nature!

And she conquered in the end.

Charles forgot about factories and cottons and customs duties—and the whole world. He yielded to her love with that recklessness which is often found in men who, apparently cold, are able to suppress their emotions absolutely on the trifling occasions of everyday life. He gave way to the storm, and with the nerve-shattering delight of mysteries unveiled, allowed himself to be swept away.

"I love you!" she cried again and again.

"I love you!" he replied, feeling that for the first time in his life he had spoken those words with absolute sincerity: those words that, perhaps in the whole dictionary, are most often used for lying and deceit.

"Write that down, love, write that down," she entreated with childish persistency.

He took out a visiting-card, and for the last time printing a kiss on those fascinating violet eyes and on that burning mouth, he wrote: "Lucy, I love you."

She snatched the card from him, read it, kissed it many a time, and put it into her bosom, only to take it out again, read it, and kiss it and Charles alternately.

She at last noticed the coat of arms on the card.

"What's that?" she said.

"My coat of arms."

"I don't know what you mean."

He explained as best he could.

"That's beyond me quite.—After all, it matters nothing to me."

"What matters then?"

"That I love you!" And she closed his mouth with a kiss. "You see, I know nothing, I only love you. You are my mind: I want no more."

They continued to sit there very long, in the deep silence of the night and of that boudoir, through whose walls and hangings not a sound came in from the outside world. They sat there, absorbed in each other and in their love, wrapped

as it were in a cloud of ecstatic thought, and plunged in the enervating air, saturated with many scents and with the sounds of kisses, warm thrilling whispers, and rustling silks; with that lamplight, ruby-red and emerald-green, spluttering sometimes as it grew fainter and fainter and threw its flickering waves on the wall-hangings and the furniture, glimmering in mystery and trembling for a moment as it flared up and crept over the room, or dying away and fading in the ever-deepening twilight, in which Buddha alone loomed, glowing weirdly, whilst those peacocks' eyes looked down upon him, dimmer and dimmer, more and more inscrutable.

CHAPTER IV



HARLES did not get out into the street until four in the morning. The coachman, tired of waiting, had driven back to the stable. The wind was roaring with a deep sound, and driving the water in the pools so violently before it that it splashed over the narrow path which passed for a side-walk, and even over the fences. Boroviecki shivered in the cold wet blast that chilled him to the marrow.

He stood still awhile, in front of Zuker's mansion; for he could see nothing but the shimmer of mud in front, and the dark buildings, tier on tier in the distance, with the factory chimneys just visible on the dusky grey background of the sky, over which the clouds were rushing at full speed, like so many bales of dirty cotton, carried away by the gale. He felt dazed still; so he went no farther, but leaned back against a paling, and strove to recover his scattered senses. Several times he had to pull himself together; for he continually had her caresses present to him, and his lips were scorched as with fire. With half-closed eyes, he used his umbrella to find out some firmer bit of ground, being as unsteady on his legs as any drunken man. He was not quite roused from his lethargy till he heard the dogs barking fiercely behind the palings; they at last woke him from that peculiar apathy which follows on overwhelming explosions of feeling.

"Kurovski must be in bed by now," he thought, much vexed when he remembered that he was to have met him at the Grand Hotel directly after the play. "I only hope this folly of mine may not have cost me too dear," he said, and

set off at a run, no longer caring though the road was deep in mud.

He could not find a cab till he had reached Piotrovsk Street, when he ordered the driver to go full speed to the hotel.

"Ah! and that telegram!" he exclaimed, with a flash of remembrance, and read it over by the light of the carriage lantern.

"Back!" he commanded, "and go straight down Piotrovsk. He may be in by now." Charles was thinking of Moritz. Once more the fever of excitement was coming over him.

He ordered the driver to wait, in case he should be wanted again, and rushed away to ring the bell.

No one answered. He was so enraged that he tore down the bell-pull, and stood there beating at the door with all his might; but it was long before Matthew came round to open it.

"Is Moritz at home?"

"Since he went to the synagogue—— Is it Mr. Moritz you mean?"

"Is he at home? Answer me," Charles roared in a fury.

Matthew was as drunk as could be. He came walking with a candle in his hand, quite undressed, his eyes half closed, and his face discoloured with clotted blood and bruises.

"Mr. Moritz—I think I know—Mr. Moritz—— Aha!"

"You brute!" Charles screamed, and struck him a violent blow in the face.

Moritz was out. Baum was in, sleeping on the great divan in the dining-room, with his clothes on, and a cigarette between his clenched teeth.

Upon the table, on the floor, and on the sideboard, there lay plates and empty bottles in great number. The samovar chimney had a long green veil flung over it.

"Oh! I see. Antka has been here. He has enjoyed himself. —Max! Max!" he called out very loud, and shook the sleeper to wake him.

Max remained motionless, sleeping soundly, and snoring noisily.

Boroviecki, determined to find out from him where Moritz was, at last lost patience, and, taking the man by the shoulders, set him on his feet. Max, resentful at being waked, stumbled against a chair, and, catching it up, threw it with all his might on the table.

"Take that for waking me, you damned monkey!" And he sat down quietly on the divan, pulled off his coat, wrapped up his head in it, and fell asleep instantly.

Charles, now in despair, and finding it impossible to rouse Max, cried out: "Matthew!" "Matthew!" he called out again, and went into the ante-room.

"Coming, Mr. Director; but I can't find where the candle has gone to. I'm looking for it.—Coming!" the man said in a sleepy, cracked, and drunken voice, trying vainly to rise from the floor, where he had lain sleeping since Boroviecki knocked him down.

He rose to his knees, but fell down again face forward, working his arms about as if to swim. Boroviecki set him on his legs, led him into the dining-room, and propped him up against the stove.

"Now, where did you get drunk like that?" he asked. "How many times have I told you that if you drank I'd send you off to the devil! D'you hear what I say?"

"I hear, Mr. Director, I hear.—Aha! Mr. Moritz or somebody!" he stammered, trying to find his bearings, but to no purpose.

"Who has smashed your face so? It looks like a swine's snout."

"Smash my face?—Did anyone? By God! Mr. Director, no one can smash my face, for, by God, Mr. Director, I would break all his bones—spoil his mug—polish him off! He'd catch it fine, he would!"

Boroviecki, seeing that nothing was to be got out of a fellow so tipsy, brought a decanter of water, and, holding the man with one hand, poured it out over his head. Matthew twisted and squirmed about, and got away, but he was somewhat sobered. He wiped his bruised and bleeding face with his hands, and stared stupidly round him.

"Has Mr. Moritz been here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where has he gone to?"

"He went off with a little dark woman, I think, and was to go to the Grand Hotel."

"What people were here just now?"

"Oh, lots of them: Mr. Bein, Mr. Hertz, and other Jews. I got supper ready for you, with Agatha to help."

"And then you guzzled and drank like a pig.—But who smashed your face so?"

"Why, no one."

He felt his head and face mechanically, but the pain of the touch make him wince.

"Well, how did you get those knocks about your face, hey?"

"Well—perhaps—Mr. Moritz was here, and that dark monkey too, and the hunchback."

"Tell me at once where you got fuddled, and who knocked you about so!"

"Drunk I was not, and nobody beat me. I went out to get beer for the gentlemen. At the tavern there were some chaps I knew, and they stood me drinks. Good for us! I did the same for them: glass for glass, I and they.—Then there came in men from our bleachery: good Poles, men of my country; they stood me drinks. Good for us! So I did the same, glass for glass. But I was not drunk, by God! Mr. Director, as I live, I was as sober as you. Smell my breath, Mr. Director, and judge for yourself."

He leaned forward, closed his eyes, and, with the stove behind to steady him, blew hard into the room.

Boroviecki went out to his own, and let Matthew go on talking: "And then some weavers and fullers from old Mr. Baum's came in. They drank with us; we stood drinks; but those Germans—nasty fellows!—wouldn't stand drinks in their turn. Then I just tapped one of them (as with a straw) and down he went; and another hit me on the crown with his tankard. Then I just brushed him (as with a straw) and down he went too; and the Germans sprang at my

throat. I was not fighting, for I know you don't like that, Mr. Director. As an obedient servant, I wouldn't fight; only, when one had me by the hair, the others by the throat, and one more struck at my face, I said to myself: 'I would not have my coat, a gift of Mr. Director, spoiled'; so I said to him, friendly-like: 'Let go!' And he stuck me in the ribs with a knife. Then I banged his head against the wall—and he didn't get up any more.

"My fellows came to help me, and we polished them off all right. I didn't fight; I only just touched a man (as with a straw); a chicken would have stood it; but the swine fell down flat. They are a weak-legged folk; awfully weak, those Germans are. As with a straw I touched him—and behold, he lay flat on the ground!"

"You go to bed!" Boroviecki growled; and, putting out the light, led Matthew to the kitchen and went in search of Moritz.

Both the Victoria and the Grand Hotel were closed.

"Is Mr. Kurovski asleep?"

"No, sir; the room was prepared, but he never came at all."

"Was Mr. Welt here last evening?"

"He was, sir, with Mr. Cohn and some ladies; but they went to Arcadia afterwards."

He drove on to Arcadia, but found no one there. Other taverns where the young men of Lodz were wont to enjoy themselves were tried by him with like ill success.

"Where has that monkey hid himself?" he wondered petulantly; then on a sudden called out to the driver: "To the mead-shop! He's there if he's anywhere."

"All right, sir—in a jiffy!"

The man whipped up his horse as hard as he could, for it was going frightfully slow, stumbling at every rut and hole in the road; and over the cobbled way, with its deep and billowy depressions, the cab, like a boat on the waves, pitched and tossed to and fro.

Charles swore and clenched his teeth; but, endeavouring to get the better of those quivering nerves of his, that made

his hand shake till every cigarette he wanted to light went to pieces, he forced his mind back to that cotton business.

"Our man Bauer has sold the telegram to Zuker—and got well paid, of course.—What an extraordinary woman!" he broke off, reverting to his reminiscences of Lucy, in which he presently was plunged.

Though he had been acquainted with her for some years since, he had never paid special attention to her till now, being at the time intimate with a Mrs. Likiert; moreover, he had heard that she was almost as phenomenally silly as she was beautiful.—"But what a temperament!" he thought, full of burning memories of her.

For some time he had been aware that she was taking notice of him: her looks, as well as her persistent invitations to her house (which he had invariably declined), told him as much. And then, she was always to be found wherever she knew she should meet him.

The gossips of Lodz—where the men are noted for the zest and subtle art with which they work in that domain—had even before now set to whisper and put two and two together; but Boroviecki's detachment (he had been for the last few months engaged in planning the future factory, in which he was totally absorbed) had made them quite lose the scent.

He knew Zuker personally: a man who of recent years had grown into a millionaire, though beginning his career as a manufacturer in Lodz by purchasing odds and ends of used-up cotton prints, no longer of any value to their makers, or scraps of paper, or quantities of cotton dust, such as always are found about weaving looms. Charles strongly disliked him for the frippery he sold, vile imitations of the stuffs made by Bucholc, like them as to colours and patterns, but infinitely inferior in quality, yet sold so cheap that there was no competition possible.

He knew that Zuker's wife had no lover. In a town wherein every man, from the millionaire at the top to the very last wheel in the great economic machine, has to work hard and devote himself entirely to business, there are exceedingly

few professional Don Juans, and as few opportunities for intrigues and conquests. And besides, if such there happened to be, they were immediately blazoned and gossiped about.

"Has that woman anything like a soul? I wonder," Charles thought, at the remembrance of her unbridled transports. "Oh, why did I let myself in for it just at this very crisis in my affairs?—To the deuce with love, if it is to hamper me now that I am starting my factory, and on borrowed money too!—And yet——"

Then he reflected, seeking to decide whether his was true love, and ended by persuading himself quite honestly that what he experienced was real affection for the woman, and not the typical outburst of a healthy and vigorous temperament.

"Well," he concluded, "come what may, the game is well worth the candle!"

Here the driver, wheeling round, pulled up at the very corner of Spacerova Street, before the synagogue.

CHAPTER V



THE restaurant Charles had come to in his search after Moritz stood immediately behind the synagogue, and was surrounded by four-storeyed office buildings like huge stone boxes, but on three sides only: the fourth was bounded by the green railings of a small garden which ended in the great bare red walls of some factory. At the bottom of the yard there stood a small one-storeyed outhouse. Its windows shone bright, and from within there came a great hubbub, like the braying of many asses.

"Ah!" he thought, "the whole gang is in there," as he entered a large low-ceilinged saloon, so dim with cigar-smoke that he at first could make out nothing at all in the bluish-grey haze, just lit up by the golden globes of the gas-lights.

Hard on a score of persons sat close round a long table, shouting, talking loud, and singing, to the accompaniment of jingling plates and the stridulous clink of a broken glass now and then. The uproar was so confused and ear-splitting that the very walls seemed aquiver, and nothing could be heard.

Presently there came a slight lull, and from one end of the table a hoarse drunken voice struck up the song of "Agatha"—a favourite one: some abominable doggerel about a woman who is requested to pay for a kiss with a glass of beer! The name Agatha was repeated twice in every line, the drinkers yelling it in chorus when it came, to every possible and impossible air.

"Boom-boom! la la la! Agatha! Tra la la la! Agatha! Tsip tsip tsip! Agatha!"—And so on.

The song somehow roused them to such a pitch of excitement that they beat time on the table with their sticks, that tankards were hurled at the walls or shattered to pieces against the stove, and that some could not even help thumping the floor with chairs, singing all the time, madly and with eyes closed, like blind men: "Agatha! Agatha!"

In dismay, the landlord came to appeal to them: "Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, pray make less noise! We shall have the police in here presently."

"You hold your tongue: it's we who pay.—Please, miss, another glass of beer."

"Agatha! Agatha!" one office clerk was howling low, with half-closed eyes, strenuously rapping on the table with his cane.

"Enjoyment after the Lodz fashion!" Charles grunted, while looking for Moritz.

"The Director!—Gentlemen, the firm of Herman Bucholtz and Company! So we are all here now!—More brandy, miss!" Such was the speech of a tall thickset German.

He staggered about, making ample gestures, as if to say more; but his legs gave way, and he tottered back on to the sofa behind him.

"I have business with you—urgent business," Charles said, sitting down beside Welt and Leo Cohn, who drank quite apart from the rest.

"If you need money, here's my pocket-book," said Moritz, pointing to an inside coat-pocket of his. "Or wait a bit: let's go to the bar.—Why, devil take it! I'm tipsy!" he growled, attempting in vain to stand straight.

"Will you sit down, Mr. Director?" Leo gurgled. "Here's vodka, ah! And cognac too, ah!"

"Something to eat, pray; I'm ravenous."

A barmaid brought him some hot dogs; there was nothing else to be had. Boroviecki set to, paying no heed to the company, drinking and chatting in separate groups.

They were almost exclusively young men of Lodz, mostly employees in the offices and warehouses, with a sprinkling of technicians and specialists in other directions.

"Woman indeed! Hold your peace! Not worth while to be a woman: time lost," exclaimed, with a loud laugh, Felix Fishbin, a man universally known in Lodz.

"I say, König," he broke off, "you're my friend, but—I say it with sorrow—you grow more and more stupid every day. Your brain is all in your belly; really, I'm afraid for you.—Gentlemen, the man stuffs himself so tight that his skin will soon be too small and he'll have to jump out of it. Ho, ho!"

There was a general laugh, but König answered not a word. He went on drinking his beer and staring with lacklustre eyes in front of him. His coat was off, and his shirt-collar undone.

"Now, Doctor, let's return to the problem of women," Fishbin continued to his neighbour, who sat with his chin sunk on his chest, incessantly and unweariedly twisting his blond moustache, and at times rather nervously brushing his coat-lapels, or pushing back out of sight his rather soiled cuffs.

"Yes, the problem is interesting, if only from a socio-psychological point of view."

"There is no problem at all! Do you know even one decent woman?"

"Mr. Felix, you are intoxicated! How can you? Why, I'll show you here in Lodz hundreds of the best and noblest and brightest," he cried, now thoroughly roused from his former apathy, jumping up and down in his seat, and brushing his coat-lapels with nervous movements of great rapidity.

"Those women must be your patients then, and you're bound to speak well of them."

"From a socio-psychological point of view, what you say is——"

"Is truth—from every point of view and however you take it. Yes, it is true—true—true! And prove to me that it is not so."

"That's what I am telling you."

"Mere talk, all that, mere prating; I want facts. I am a

realist, Dr. Vysocki, I am a positivist.—Barmaid! the coffee-machine. And chartreuse."

"Very well then. I name the wives of Bobrovski, of Anzel, of Bibrich; what of them?"

"Ha ha! Name some more. I have had capital fun with these."

"How dare you? They are honest women," the doctor cried, flushing scarlet.

"And how do you know? Have you got them on commission?" Felix retorted cynically.

"I have not yet named the best of them: Zuker's wife, for instance, and Mrs. Wolkman."

"They don't count. One is kept locked up by her husband; the other is too busy to see anyone: she has had her fourth baby in three years."

"And Mrs. Kessler, then, and Mrs. Grosplik? Are they shoddy goods for you? Answer me that."

"I shall not."

"Ah, you see!" Dr. Vysocki exclaimed, twirling his moustache with a radiant face.

"I am a realist, and say nothing, only because plain women are of no account for me. Now these are so very ugly that not even Leo Cohn (who would take anyone) would take them on commission!"

"They count for me, though, and in the first rank too; for, besides the common decency of their sex, they possess morality."

"Oh! Morality? What sort of goods is that? Who trades in it?" Felix replied with a roar of laughter.

"Felix, that's a good joke, a first-rate joke of yours!" Leo Cohn called to him across the table, clapping his hands.

The doctor drank silently the hot coffee poured out to him by Felix, twirled his moustache, brushed his coat-lapels, pushed his cuffs in, and turned to his other neighbour, who sat tippling in silence, now and then wiping his spectacles with a red handkerchief.

"And you, Counsellor, do you think about women as Felix does?"

"I say—look here—hard to explain. H'm." And, dismissing the matter with a wave of his hand, he drank some more beer, lit his cigarette, which was always going out, and fixed his eyes upon the flaming match.

"I ask you what you think of women!" the doctor said fiercely, setting himself to take up the cudgels on behalf of women once more.

"You see, my dear sir, I do not think at all now; I am drinking my beer." And, waving his hand disdainfully, the lawyer plunged his face into the fresh tankard the bar-maid had set before him.

He took a long pull, and wiped away the froth from the scanty moustache that overhung his mouth like a buff-coloured bit of thatch.

"Time is money!—Whose turn to pay?" he observed, knocking with his tankard upon the table; then, intending to raise it to his lips, his hand failed him: beer and tankard rolled on to the floor. He was, however, unconscious of his loss. Turning half round in his arm-chair, he threw a napkin over his head—and went to sleep.

Meanwhile Charles was growing furiously impatient. "Moritz, you have fuddled yourself quite enough. Let's go home; there's a big piece of business afoot."

Moritz, now quite drunk and incapable, was resting his head on his hands, and whenever addressed, made reply: "I am Moritz Welt, Piotrovska, 75, first floor.—Go to the devil!"

"Mr. Cohn, I'd like to do some business with you," Boroviecki said.

"How much do you want?"

He clicked his tongue, snapped his fingers, and his pocket-book was out in a moment.

Boroviecki smiled. "You are no slowcoach," he said.

"I am Leo Cohn. How much?"

"Moritz will let you know to-morrow. I only wished to make sure. Many thanks."

"All the money I have and can raise is at your disposal."

"Thanks once more.—For three months at most."

"A mere trifle; don't mention it. Of no consequence between friends."

Here Moritz moaned: "Soda-water!" And he drank it, when brought, straight from the siphon.

"Do you want me to drive home?" he asked presently.

"I do. At once. Very big affair."

"*Our* business?"

"Ours. Extremely important; you have no idea."

"If it's business, then I am pretty near sober now. Come along."

Charles went out, holding Moritz up; for he still reeled and could not keep his balance. After them there came through the open door a rush of noise and clamour pouring out into the dark quiet courtyard, and dying away into the distance and the night.

Dawn had risen upon Lodz by now. The black chimneys were more and more distinctly looming forth; the roofs began to glimmer, lit up by the pallid day-break, scattering its delicate roseate and pearly hues over the world. A frost had come, hardening the mud, and in places covering the pools with thin sheets of ice, whitening the arches over the street gutters, and adorning the trees with a hoary deposit, very beautiful. The day promised to be splendid. Moritz breathed deep in the chilly, frozen air, and was presently almost himself again.

"Do you know, I cannot remember to have ever been so drunk in my life. It's unpardonable in me; there's a noise in my head like the bubbling of a samovar."

"I'll get you some tea with lemon-juice in it. You'll soon be quite sober. And then there will be such a surprise that you'll want to get tipsy again."

"How I wonder what it can be!"

As soon as they came in, Charles, who preferred not to wake Matthew, who slept in a kneeling position in front of the fire-place, poured water into the samovar, and lit the gas under it.

Moritz had taken a most drastic means to get sober. He had poured cold water all over his head, and even taken a

cold bath! Having drunk many cups of tea, he at last felt quite restored to sobriety.

"Ah! I am now in my right senses again. But what the devil! how disgustingly cold I feel!"

Meanwhile Charles was calling "Max!" and shaking his friend very vigorously. But young Baum made no answer, and only wrapped the coat all the tighter over his head.

"It's no use, he's too fast asleep, and I'm in a hurry and can't wait. Read this wire, Moritz. But," he added, "do not look at the address." And he handed him the telegram.

"Well, but it's in cipher; I can't make out one word!"

"Of course. I'll read it out to you."

And he read it slowly, distinctly, stressing every word, especially figures and dates.

Moritz, quite himself again, started up in his chair at the very first words he heard, and proceeded to devour mentally the contents of the whole message. Charles had finished, and was looking at him in triumph, while Moritz still remained motionless, contemplating things. Several times he had to fix his glasses on to his nose; he fell to smiling sweetly, as to some invisible loved one, and pulled nervously at his beard. Finally he spoke in grave tones.

"Charles, I tell you, we have a future before us, with lots of money. This message is worth a hundred thousand roubles to us; or fifty thousand at the very least. On such an occasion as this, we may well embrace each other. Ah! what a stroke of business we shall make!" And he made a step towards Boroviecki, intending to embrace him in the joy and rapture of his heart.

"None of that, Moritz. What we want now is cash, not embraces."

"You are right, quite right. What we want is money, money, money!"

"The more we can buy, the more we shall gain."

"But what a to-do there will be in Lodz! Heigh-ho! Should Shaya or Bucholc get to know of it—if either managed to buy up all the cotton—how mad the other men would be!—How did you come by this news?"

"That's my secret, Moritz. It was a reward." And he smiled within himself, as his thoughts flew back to Lucy.

"Your secret is a great asset for you. But there's one thing that amazes me."

"And what's that?"

"Charles, I didn't think you had it in you. Frankly, I never should have imagined that, with such a piece of good fortune in your hands, you could decide to share it with us."

"That means you didn't know me."

"It means I know you now still less than I did." And he eyed him as though suspecting some trick. How anyone could willingly share profits with another was inconceivable to him.

"We'll talk this over later, and at leisure," said Charles. "If I share with you, it's because you are my partners and old friends. And besides, I feel the pride of doing them a service."

"Pride costs dear."

"Would you appraise even pride?"

"Can't one appraise everything?"

"Appraise our friendship then. How much is it worth?"

"Charles, don't laugh at me when I say I can state its worth in roubles. The very fact that you and I are living together gets me credit for twenty thousand more than I should otherwise have. You see how open and frank I am with you."

Boroviecki laughed with pleasure to hear him say this.

"But what I do now, you also would do without fail; and so would Baum as well."

"As to Baum, Charles, I fear, I very much fear he is a cunning fellow: a man of business. For myself, yes; I would do the same, and be delighted."

As he spoke, he stroked his beard and set his glasses astraddle, so as to mask the expression of his eyes and mouth, which gave the lie to what he was saying.

"You are a gentleman—a true Boroviecki."

"Max, you lie-abed, get up, will you!" Charles bawled in Baum's ear.

"I won't be waked," Max cried in a rage, kicking out.

"Don't kick, but get up; we've got business news that won't wait."

"Charles, why wake him?" Moritz whispered very low.

"Surely we must all three consult together."

"And why not we two by ourselves?"

"Because we are to be three," Boroviecki retorted coldly.

"Of course we are to be. But I meant that we might as well arrange matters without him, and tell him all when he has done sleeping and got up.—In Lodz we form a trio—friends of the first water."

He set to pace the room with quicker steps. He spoke of the profits to be made, jotted figures down, sat for a minute at the table, drinking a cup of tea held in both hands and in his excitement letting his glasses again and again fall into his tea. Then he would let out a curse, wipe them dry on his coat-tails, and write columns of figures on the oil-table-cloth, which he afterwards rubbed out with his moistened finger.

Baum meantime had risen, puffing and panting, sworn in several languages, eaten all that was over from the supper of yestereve, lit his short English pipe, knocked the ashes out into a saucer, and said: "What do you want? Say it quick, for I am sleepy."

"You will not go to bed. You have to listen."

"Don't prattle!"

Charles read aloud the telegram.

Moritz explained the entire plan, which was very simple: to get cash, as much cash as possible, and to go at once to Hamburg to buy raw cotton and ship it to Lodz before the customs tariff and the freight rates were raised. Then sell it as a matter of course, at the highest profit.

Baum meditated a long while. He wrote something in his note-book, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stretched his long, bony arms, and said: "Put me down for ten thousand roubles; that's all I can manage. Good-night!"

He rose and made for his bedroom.

"Wait a little; we must talk matters over together. Time enough to sleep afterwards."

"Devil take you and your palavers! Oh, those Poles! When in Riga, for three whole years I never slept once properly; they were every night and all night long 'talking matters over' with me. And it's just the same here."

He unwillingly sat down again and proceeded to fill his pipe.

"You, Moritz, how much will you give?"

"The very same sum: ten thousand. Can't raise more just now."

"Then I," said Charles, "am going to put in as much."

"Gains or losses are to be shared alike."

"But," said Baum, "which of us is to go?"

"Moritz alone can: he is well up in such dealings, they are his specialty."

"Very good; I'll go.—How much cash will be paid down on account?"

"I have just fifteen roubles," Max observed sarcastically, "and you can also have my diamond ring to pawn. The pawnbroker will give you more than he would me."

"I," said Charles, "have by me four hundred roubles, of which you can take three hundred."

"Who will stand surety for your notes of hand, Baum?"

"You shall have all in cash."

"And I, should I not be able to get cash in time, shall send you notes of hand with first-rate endorsements."

A pause ensued. Max was resting his head on the table, eyeing Moritz the while, who was writing and casting up accounts. Charles strode about the room with slow steps, occasionally refreshing himself by inhaling scents from a costly smelling-bottle.

The day, now fully come, poured its crude white morning rays through the windows, heavily curtained with *guipure*, and dimmed the lamps and the tapers burning in their great bronze chandeliers.

A great calm reigned in Lodz—the calm of Sunday rest, spreading all over the town and into every habitation. The far-away clatter of a cab sounded loud, rumbling over the frozen mire and through the empty, deserted street. Charles

threw open a tiny window in the casement, to let in some fresh air and look outside. Roofs and pavement were white with hoar-frost, sparkling like gems in the sun, that was rising at a great distance from Lodz and its factories, whose chimneys, like a dense and sombre forest, rose up in front with clear-cut though harsh outlines, strongly traced on the gold and azure background of the sky.

"Well," said Charles, turning away from the window, "and what if the affair fails?"

"It fails, then, doggoned! and there's an end of it!" Max grunted with cool unconcern.

"But then we may lose not only our profits, but our capital—and perhaps our factory that is to be."

"That's out of the question," cried Max stormily, striking the table. "The factory has got to be started. I cannot go on with my father any more. And how long will Father himself keep going? A year—perhaps two—and his sons-in-law will have sucked him dry. And Zuker will eat him up besides. He has already begun, with the imitations of our counterpanes and coloured blankets, which he sells at half the prices we can afford to quote. Yes, he'll eat us up alive, he will. And I was not made for a hired workman in another man's concern. I am thirty, and need to set up for myself."

"I too refuse to give up the factory idea. Somehow or other we must realize it. Bucholz too; I can't stay with that man any more."

"Are you afraid of the risk, then?" said Moritz.

"Yes, for we may lose all."

"You, Charles, come what may, cannot be ruined. What with your special knowledge, and your name, and your gentle birth—and your face—you can always and easily come in for a million—though possibly saddled with Müller's daughter."

"How can you talk so? I have a fiancée—whom I love."

"That's no hindrance; one may have two fiancées at a time, and love both of them—and marry a third with heaps of money!"

Charles made no answer. Miss Mada Müller and her child-like prattle had come rushing into his mind. He set to pacing the room, while Max sat at the table, and smoked his pipe, and dangled his long legs, basking in the kisses of the sun. Its beams, shining athwart the windows of the opposite house, threw a long, golden streak, filled with tremulous dancing specks, upon his drowsy face and on the dark head of Moritz, who was sitting at the other end of the table.

"If you fear risks," said the latter, "I'll give you some advice; or, rather, I will just point out that there are risks. Suppose all the cotton traders in Lodz know the news; that I find them all there before me when I get to Hamburg? Suppose this great, this desperate need of theirs sends the price of cotton up beyond measure? And if we find no one in Lodz to sell our raw cotton to—what then?"

"We shall use it in our factory, and make more money still," Max observed, turning one side of his head and face to catch the sunbeams.

"Well, but there's a way out of all these difficulties. You will have your profit, and without any risks whatever."

"How's that?" Charles asked, stopping in his stride.

"Give the whole affair up to me. I offer you five—no—ten thousand roubles for your shares in the business—whether I lose or gain—and that in ready cash, to be paid up in a few hours, and without any claim on you."

"Swine!" was Baum's muttered comment.

"Be quiet, Max; he makes the offer out of friendship."

"Certainly, for if I lose, you will still be able to start the factory; and in case I succeed, the factory will lose nothing."

"Let's lose no time in talking rot," said Charles. "We must go to bed. We shall make our venture at equal risks, and you, Moritz, must start for Hamburg this very day."

"But we want proper guarantees. He's buying with our money, and may declare it is his own; he's quite up to that!"

"How can you, Max?" Moritz returned indignantly. "Is our friendship and my word of honour not worth a dead dog?"

"Your word is gold, and your friendship a good security, but—business is business."

"Let's arrange matters so," said Charles. "Moritz will buy the cotton, and send it on to us, C.O.D., by fast goods-train. We shall pay here."

"And how can I be sure you will not leave me out of the affair altogether? Ah!"

"Swine!" Max yelled, stung to the quick, and beating on the table with his fist.

"Shut up, Max, he's right. Let's sit down and make a written agreement and have it afterwards witnessed and legalized by a notary."

They at once set themselves to draw up an agreement in due form, containing a great many clauses, that formed them into a sort of company: three traders in raw cotton. In this instrument every contingency was foreseen.

"Now we know where we stand," Moritz said. "How much do you allow me for managing the affair?"

"The usual commission on each bale, to begin with; after which we shall see what we can do."

"Please pay down in advance as much as you can. You shall have a strict account of the losses incurred through the Hamburg journey—losses to my agency, which will be doing nothing during that time."

"Swine!" Max shouted for the third time, turning sunwards the other side of his face.

"Max, you have three times called me a swine. And I, though but once, call you an ass. Remember we are doing business, not making love or courtship. You yourself would circumvent God, if you could but manage to do so; and you call me a swine because I claim simply what's mine by right? I appeal to Charles."

"You be hanged and go to the devil!"

"Come, come, enough of this squabbling.—Moritz, will you take to-night's express?"

"I will."

"Only, my dear friends, just remember about the cotton:

no one, either now or at any time, is to know where we got our information from."

"But even we two don't know."

"A secret shared by three is none."

"Now, let's off to bed; and you, Charles, don't wake me.—Come, Moritz, my boy; a farewell kiss, since we're parting. I shall not see you before you leave; shall be in bed till to-morrow morning. So good-bye—and mind, don't take us in," he added playfully, embracing Moritz with all his heart; for though always quarrelling and brawling, they were somehow fond of each other.

"Take you in? Nobody could," Moritz grumbled, apparently regretting the impossibility.

Noon was past when Charles woke.

The sun shone straight into his bedchamber, and its rays flooded the exquisite furniture and appointments.

Matthew, washed and tidied up, and in Sunday apparel, came in on tiptoe.

"What is the matter?" Charles asked; for Bucholz would frequently send him directions overnight.

"Nothing from the factory, sir; only folks from Kurov, with a letter. They have been waiting here all the forenoon."

"Let them wait. Bring me the letter, and let them have some tea."

Charles dressed and went to wake his friends. Both had gone.

"Matthew, is it long since the gentlemen left?"

"Mr. Baum got up at nine, telephoned home for a carriage, and drove off as soon as it came."

"The age of miracles is not yet over."

"And Mr. Moritz went out at eleven. He ordered me to pack his travelling-valise and take it to the night express."

"Call these people in.—There's something wrong with me; what is it?" he thought, rubbing his forehead. His head was heavy, and he felt out of sorts.

The events of the night—the theatre, the boxes, Lucy, the wired message, the tavern, and Moritz, and Baum, whirled

about his brain, fragmentary and nebulous, and passed away, leaving after them a dull sense of weariness.

He cast his eyes on a slender crystal vase, with a most lovely pattern of old French fleurs-de-lis on the deep-purple ground of coloured glass; and the sun shining through it tinted with blood-red and orange the cream-hued silk table-cover.

"It's a pretty combination," he said listlessly; he did not care to gaze any longer.

"Praised be Jesus Christ!" said a voice; and he turned to meet the visitors.

"So you are from Kurov. Have you got a letter from your young lady?"

He stretched out his hand, and noted that it was faintly yellow.

"Yes, there is something written.—Hand it over, Mother," said a grave-looking peasant in a white capote with a bordering of black braid. He stood in the doorway, bolt upright, holding a sheepskin cap pressed against his capote with both hands. His blue eyes looked hard at Boroviecki, while ever and anon he tossed back a mane of tow-coloured hair that would come tumbling down over his clean-shaven face.

The woman, having extricated the letter from wellnigh a dozen wrappings, handed it to Charles, after embracing his knees.

He quickly read the letter through.

"Is your name Soha?" he queried.

"Ay, Soha is my name.—Speak, Mother!" the peasant replied, poking her in the ribs with his elbow.

"It is true, sir; he is Soha. I am his wife."

"We have come to beg you for work to do in the factory, and for——" Here she hesitated, with a side-glance at her husband.

"Ay, Mother, tell all about it. From the beginning."

"Well, sir, I will tell all, as it were in confession. We had a cabin close to the manor; it was the first from the village——"

"As short as you can, please; I have little time."

"Say, Mother, that which took place, for the gentleman is in haste."

"Well," Boroviecki interrupted after a time, "that's enough.—You have, as I understand, been burned out? And now you want work in the factory?"

"Just so, honourable sir. We are beggars; everything's burned—cabin, cow-byre, and live-stock too—all!"

She burst into tears, while her husband stood gravely by, with solemn eyes fixed on Boroviecki, and tossing back from time to time his tawny mane, ever falling over his eyes.

"Know you any man in Lodz?"

"There are here several men of our parts. There is Antek Michael's son.—Mother, speak out."

"Ay, there are several; but how are we to find them?"

"Soha, come here again on Tuesday at one. I shall find work for you.—Matthew!" he called out, "find lodgings for these people, and see to their wants."

Matthew made a wry face; the order was not to his taste; he looked down upon that sort of people.

"Now go. God be with you. Come on Tuesday."

"I shall come.—Mother, speak out."

She bent down to Boroviecki's knees and, embracing them, "I have eight eggs," she said, "laid by our only hen—the one that was not burnt. I ask you, gracious sir, to accept them: may they do you good! It's with all our heart we offer them," and she placed a bundle at his feet.

"All right. Thanks. Come on Tuesday."

"I shall. May they do you good!" And Soha bent down to Boroviecki's knees.

He broke away from them and went into the next room.

"What primitive creatures—what survivals!" he grunted, though really touched—a little. Then he sat down to read his fiancée's letter again.

"Dear Charles,

"Many thanks for your last letter. It gave Grandfather great pleasure, and drew tears from my eyes, I was so delighted. How kind of you to send me those flowers—and by express messenger too!"

That made him smile. It was too funny! Why, those flowers were a present from his sweetheart, and so many that he did not know where to put them; so he had passed them on to his fiancée.

"Oh, what splendid roses! Were they grown in Lodz? Or has my dear Charles ordered them from Nice, as he once did? If so, it would be very pleasant to me, but painful as well, for I have nothing so lovely to offer in return. Do you know, these flowers are all nearly as blooming as they were at first, a fortnight ago; is it not wonderful? True, I take great care of them. Not one leaf but I have put my lips to, repeating: 'I love!' But Grandfather makes fun of me, and says he will write you about it; so here I am, confessing it to you myself. I feel sure you will not take it amiss, will you?"

"O my dear Anne!" he murmured. His feelings were getting the better of him, and he read on, with glistening eyes.

"As to the money, all is settled: it is on deposit in the Commercial Bank, and at your disposal; for I ordered it to be placed there in your name, in *our* name."

"The girl is of pure gold!" he thought.

"When are you starting the factory? I am waiting most impatiently to know, for I am so eager to see it, and to see my dearest Charles—a factory-owner! Grandfather has even made a siren whistle, and wakes us and calls us all to breakfast and dinner with it.

"Yesterday Mr. Adam Stavski was here. Do you remember him? It seems you were together at college. He told us many a curious and funny thing about your life. It is only from him that I heard my dear Charles was such a naughty boy in those days, and, even at college, loved by the ladies! But Grandfather denies it all stoutly, and says Mr. Adam Stavski is a professional story-teller. Which of them do you tell me to believe?"

"I must end now, for my eyes are very tired, and Grandfather is calling and calling me to go to bed. Good-night, my fairy Prince, good-night! To-morrow I'll write more. Good-night!"

"Anne."

The postscript recommended the bearer very warmly to Charles.

"The money's all right—twenty thousand roubles. She's a

girl in a thousand.—To give up all her dowry to me, and without a thought!" He read the letter over again, and locked it up in his desk.

"Yes, a dear good devoted girl, but—— Why is there that *but?*—Oh, the devil!"

He stamped wildly on the carpet, and flung heaps of papers about the table.

"Yes, good she is; perhaps the best girl I know—but—but—is she what I care for? Do I love her? Have I ever loved her?—Let's put the question quite candidly," he thought, with deliberate self-examination.

Matthew came in. "Mr. Director, President Bucholc's carriage is here."

Charles got in, and drove to Bucholc's mansion. It was quite at the end of the town, further out than his factories were, and stood in a large park, one end of which was bounded by the walls of the factories which towered above it: a one-storeyed house, called a palace, built in Renaissance style, with something both of Berlin and of Lodz: domelike turrets at each corner, several ornamented façades, and a terraced roof, provided with an iron balustrade.

A clump of large, but dismal-looking birch-trees rose with silvery trunks all along the carriage-drive. The walks, strewn with coal cinders, ran like strips of black lining amongst the roses and exotic trees, which stood in their winter swaddling of straw in long, straight lines cutting one another at right angles, all about the big rectangular lawn, at each of whose four corners rose a statue, now muffled up in pieces of tattered flannelette, discoloured by many rains and frosts. Glittering in sunshine athwart trees and shrubs, a greenhouse was visible close to the factory walls at one end of the park. As to the park itself, it was dreary and ill kept.

A footman, in a black livery, ushered Boroviecki into the antechamber, which was carpeted and embellished with photographs of the works and of various groups of workmen, and with maps of the estates belonging to Bucholc. Four doors led to the ground-floor interior; an iron winding staircase, to the first floor. A great lantern of wrought iron,

Gothic style, hanging from the ceiling, shed a gentle light around.

The footman, walking in front, raised a *portière* and opened the door. Boroviecki, slowly following, traversed a magnificent room, upholstered in a most ponderous, massive way, and rather in obscurity, the blinds being almost down. A thick carpet muffled any sound of steps. The place was depressing, with its atmosphere of solemn and chilly gravity. The furniture stood clad in dark-hued wrappers; mirrors, girandoles, chandeliers, nay, even the pictures on the walls, were veiled and vanishing in the dim light, in which nothing could glitter but the bronze ornamentation of the majolica stoves and the gilt stucco of the ceiling.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the footman announced, ushering him into a room where, close to the window, nestling in a big easy-chair, Mrs. Bucholc sat, holding a stocking in her hand.

"Good day, Mr. Boroviecki!" she said, not waiting for his greeting; and, taking a knitting-needle out, she stretched forth her hand to him with an automatic movement.

"Good day, madam," he said, kissing her hand, and passed on.

"Kundel! Kundel!" a parrot screamed after him, as it swung, perched on the window-sill.

Mrs. Bucholc stroked it, smiled fondly at a bevy of sparrows fighting under the window, cast a glance on the sunlit world outside, and went on with her knitting.

It was in the corner study that Boroviecki met Bucholc. He was sitting close to a huge dark-green stove of Danzig tiles, adorned with most beautiful patterns. In it a fire was burning, which he continually poked with the stick he always had by him.

"Good day.—Kundel! a chair for the gentleman," he roared out at the footman, who stood by the door, ready at his beck and call.

Charles, turning his back to the wall, seated himself by the old man's side. Bucholc eyed him for some time with those red-rimmed hawk-eyes of his that pierced like gimlets.

"I am ill," he said, pointing to his legs, that were swathed

in white flannel, stretched out on a low stool in front of the fire, and looked just like two rolls of raw material.

"Is it always the same thing? Rheumatism?"

"Yes, yes," was the answer, as an acute pang contorted his greyish-yellow face.

"A pity, Mr. President, that you did not winter in San Remo, or elsewhere in the south."

"Of what use would that have been? I should only have delighted Shaya and everyone who wishes me to pop off as soon as possible.—Kundel!" he said to the footman; "set this right—" pointing to one leg that was slipping off the stool. "Have a care! Have a care!" he screamed.

"I think there are but very few who would have you die. Possibly no one at all in Lodz. I may say I'm sure there are none."

"Nonsense! They all would have me die—all.—And, just to spite them, I mean to live yet a good long time.—So, then, you think no one envies me, do you?"

"Is there anyone that nobody envies?"

"How much do you think Shaya would give to have me dead?"

"Well, I may suppose that, to have you ruined at least, miserly though he is, the man would give very, very much indeed."

"Do you think so?" The old man's eyes blazed with hatred.

"All Lodz knows it."

"And he would manage to bilk them when he paid—with forged notes or worthless bills of exchange.—A cur!" Here his head sank down upon his chest, on to his padded dressing-gown with patched elbows, and he looked at the fire, musing.

Boroviecki knew the servile respect which millionaires exact too well to trouble him in his reverie, but waited to be addressed. His eyes wandered round the walls, hung with damask silk of a rich cherry-purple, with broad borders of gold. A few very mediocre German chromolithographs marred them. An enormous mahogany desk stood in a corner between two windows, a screen of stained glass shading the

light on either side. An oilcloth imitation of parquetry, very much the worse for wear, covered the study floor.

"Are you going to say anything?" the old man snarled presently.

"The talk was about Shaya just now."

"I've enough of Shaya!—Kundel! tell the fellow Hamer to come in. What? I am to take my pills in five minutes, and the fool is not here yet?—Do you know yesterday's news?"

"I know what Mr. Knoll told me at the play."

"Do you go to the play?"

"Well, Mr. President, and so do you."

"Mr. Boroviecki, I am Bucholc: I may go wherever I choose." And he raised his head proudly, with a crushing look.

Boroviecki answered in an undertone, with a provoking smile he could not suppress: "It is the theatres that are in fault, for being open to all who can buy a ticket, and not closed to all but a few."

"Oh, I am not listening to your rigmarole!" Bucholc snapped, poking the fire with his stick till the sparks flew about the room.

"Mr. President, permit me to take my leave," said Boroviecki, rising; the old man's words had incensed him.

"No, be seated; we shall have dinner in a minute. You have no cause for offence. You know how much I prize you—you, a Pole in a thousand!—Has Knoll told you everything?"

"All about yesterday's failures?"

"Yes, oh yes! He has had to go on urgent business, and I want you to take his place during his absence, while Murray takes yours in the printing-room."

"Very good. As to Murray, he's a very able fellow."

"And a fool. Sit down. I like Poles, but there is no talking to you people. A word offends you—and off you go! Softly, softly, Mr. Boroviecki; do not forget that you are in my employ."

"Mr. President mentions the fact too often for me to forget it for even one instant."

"Do you, then, think the reminder is needless?" Bucholc asked, with a friendly smile.

"That depends on those to whom and before whom it is made."

"What if I gave you horses to drive without whip or bridle?"

"A very good comparison; only it is scarce applicable to everyone in your service alike."

"I apply it, not to you, nor to some (*some*, mind you) of your associates, but only to the mass of ignorant workers."

"Yet this mass of ignorant workers consists of men."

"Of brutes, of brutes!" he cried, striking at the stool with all his force with his stick. "Don't look like that: I have the right to say what I say; I, who give them the bread they eat."

"True, but that bread is earned. They can claim it as a right."

"They earn it, but through me. I give them work to do; where would they all be but for me?"

"They would find work elsewhere," Boroviecki said quietly, but his blood was beginning to simmer in his veins.

"They would die of hunger, Mr. Boroviecki; die like dogs!"

Boroviecki was silent, exasperated by the old man's fatuous pride, who, though he stood alone in Lodz for his intelligence and his educated mind, was nevertheless unable to grasp such a simple truth.

Just then a man came in, saying: "Mr. President, I was on my way here when I met Augustus."

"Hold your tongue! Two minutes more, and you would have been behind time!—Stay!" he called harshly to his "court physician," who, somewhat taken aback by such a reception, stood demurely a few steps away from the door, and waited with an expression of dismay, with his eyes glued to Bucholc's face; while the latter, silently and with a frowning brow, was watching the hands of an old silver time-piece.

"Be careful, Hamer, be careful: I pay you for being

that, and well too," he said after a while, without raising his eyes.

"Mr. President!"

"When Bucholc speaks, you'll just hold your tongue," he said, emphasizing his words with a savage look. "I'm a punctual man. Told once for all to take pills hourly, I do so.—You, Mr. Boroviecki, must enjoy splendid health. As anyone can see."

"Such excellent health that, if I remain two years more in the printing department, I shall have consumption. The doctors have told me so already."

"Two whole years! Ah, how much cotton can be printed in two years!—Hamer, the pills!"

Hamer, in his blandest manner, counted out fifteen homeopathic pills into Bucholc's extended hand.

"How slow you are! Why, you cost me as much as a first-rate machine! Faster," he grunted, and swallowed the pills.

The footman offered him a glass of water on a silver tray, to drink after the medicine.

"He orders me to take arsenic: a new sort of cure. Well, we shall see, we shall see."

"I see, Mr. President, that you are much better already."

"Shut up, Hamer; nobody asked you."

"Have you been taking this arsenic cure a long time?" Boroviecki inquired.

"These last three months," he replied. "Hamer, you may go!" he added haughtily.

The doctor bowed and withdrew.

"A sweet man this doctor is!" Boroviecki laughed. "Nerves all made of cotton-wool!"

"I give him enough to make them so. Oh, he's well paid for it!"

"There's a telephone call for Mr. Boroviecki." The official on duty attached to Bucholc's private telephone had appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. President, may I——?"

Bucholc gave a nod.

Charles went down to Bucholc's private office, where the telephone was.

"This is Borowiecki; who is speaking?" he asked, putting his ear to the receiver.

"This is Lucy.—I love you!" was the answer, far off and tremulous in his ear.

"Crazy woman!" he said aside, with an ironical smile; but to the receiver: "Good-day."

"Come at eight this evening. No one will be at home. Come: I await you. I love you. Hear this kiss! . . . Good-bye."

And he heard a whirring sound of smacked lips—the blurred shadow of a kiss.

"Quite out of her mind.—She'll be a hard nut to crack, and it won't be an easy thing to please her," he thought, as he returned upstairs, more teased than pleased by this demonstration of love.

Bucholc, wedged fast in his arm-chair, with his stick in his lap, was perusing a large note-book full of figures, and so deeply absorbed thereby that his under lip would frequently catch at his short moustache, a movement that the factory people used to call "sucking his nose," and always meant that he was cogitating profoundly.

Beside him lay a pile of letters and other documents on a low stand: it was the day's mail, which he usually saw to, himself.

"Mr. Borowiecki, help me to sort these letters; you are taking Knoll's place for the time being; and besides, I want to divert you a bit!"

Borowiecki looked at him inquiringly.

"With the letters, yes. You'll see what letters I get, and about what." He put the note-book behind him.

"Kundel! Give them here."

The footman poured all the letters from the stand on to his lap. Bucholc, with amazing swiftness, seized envelope after envelope, flinging them behind him with the order: "For the office!" The servant caught them in the air—big envelopes with various firms' addresses.

"For Knoll—letters to my son-in-law."

"For the factory!" (These were addressed to the factory, to be delivered to the workers.)

"Main office!"—(railway invoices, demands, bills, and so on).

"Printing department!"—(price-lists of dyes, samples of colours on thin cards, painted samples of patterns).

"The hospital!"—(letters to the factory hospital and the doctors there).

"Meryenhof!"—(letters to the management of the landed estates, under the management of the factory).

"Put that apart!" (Letters of that description were sent indifferently either to Bucholc or to Knoll.)

"Look out, Kundel!" he cried suddenly, striking out with his stick behind him. He had heard a letter fall upon the floor; it was picked up, and Bucholc went on with his brief, trenchant orders.

The servant had scarce time to catch the letters as they flew, and to fling them down, each into an open box with a label corresponding to its description. They all went down by separate tubes into Bucholc's private bureau, where they were taken and distributed at once.

"Now for our little diversion!" he cried, having nothing more to throw, and only letters of various shapes and colours remaining on his lap.

Charles opened the first letter, in a lady's pretty handwriting. The envelope was quite plain, but bore a monogram, and smelt of violets.

Boroviecki demurred, fearing to be indiscreet. "Read, read!" Bucholc commanded.

"Most honourable Mr. President,

"Encouraged by the respect and reverence with which all poor unhappy people utter your name, I venture to apply to you; and all the more boldly, because I am sure that you will not leave my petition unanswered, since you never know of the misfortunes of your fellow men, or the tears and woes of orphans, without granting them your aid and assistance. Your kindness of heart is known, and known throughout the country. God knows well of whom to make millionaires!"

"That will do," Bucholc interrupted. "I am bored. Tell me what she wants."

Boroviecki looked quickly through the rest of the epistle, written all through in the same lachrymose unnatural style, and summed up: "A loan of a thousand roubles to start a shop."

"Into the fire with it!" was Bucholc's curt command. "Now for another."

This one was a most careful specimen of penmanship, by the widow of an official. She had six children and a pension of five hundred roubles a year, and applied to him for leave to sell the factory remnants on commission, which would enable her to bring up her children as honest citizens.

"Into the fire! Much harm will it do me if they all turn out thieves!"

Then came the letter of a certain nobleman, not very well spelt, and written on paper that smelt of herrings and of beer. It had probably been penned at a small restaurant in some country town, and reminded Bucholc that they had met years ago, and how on that occasion he had sold Bucholc a couple of horses. . . .

"Blind, both of them!—I know the fellow; he writes to me every year, when pay-day comes round in April.—Read no more, I know what's coming. He wants money, and swears a nobleman ought to help a nobleman! The noodle! Into the fire with it!"

And so the letters went on; some from widows, with or without children, or women with sick husbands or mothers; some from orphans, from men injured in the factory or asking for work; or from technicians, engineers and inventors of all kinds, who promised him to revolutionize the cotton industry, and meanwhile asked for a loan to work out their ideas and improve their models. There was even a love-letter—the effusion of a person he once had known, who in her present state of penury still remembered the bliss that had once been hers.

"Burn it! burn it!" he called out, shrieking with laughter, and refusing even to listen to the pathos of her high-flown

phrases, which ended with a request for a loan. "See how they care for me, all of them! All of them after my roubles!"

But there were letters, too, full of the most outrageous invectives.

"Oh, read how they lampoon me! I like these: they at least are frank, and often more entertaining than the others."

Charles read out one that began: "You leader of all the bandits of Lodz!" and went through a long litany of curses, of which the mildest were: "German swine, thief, villain, leech, dirty dog, potato-stealer!" It wound up with: "If God's vengeance fails to overtake you, that of man will not fail, tyrannical hound that you are!" There was no signature.

"Why, he's quite amusing. Ha ha! A funny brute!"

"I say, Mr. President, it's too much for me; it makes me sick."

"Read on; drink at this trough of human spleen; it will sober you down a little, and it all is part of the psychology of Lodz."

Charles gazed at him with eyes in which anger and hatred were beginning to dart forth livid flames. But he went on reading; this time, an accusation of dishonesty, brought against the head warehouseman.

"Give it me; I must go into this." And he pocketed the missive.

There were complaints against foremen besides, and threatening letters from workmen who had been discharged, and denunciations pencilled on bits of packing-paper and informing Bucholz that someone in the factory had called him "an old cutpurse" or "a pig with red-rimmed eyes."

"Hand me that; it's an important document. I like to know what people say of me"; and he laughed with hearty contempt.

"Do you think I read them every day, as now? Ha ha! Augustus lights the fire with them, and I get thus much profit out of the trouble they take."

"For all that, sir, you give several thousands every year to public charities."

"So I do, so I do, or they would have them out of me by

force. Yes, for the sake of peace, I throw a bone to a dog now and then."

"The old adage," said Charles, "'*Noblesse oblige!*' is now changed to 'Millions oblige!'"

"A very stupid nihilistic adage it is! What do I care if men starve? Some people must belong to the Have-Nothing class. Nobody ever gave me a groschen. I had to earn and keep what I got hold of, all by myself. Why and wherefore should I give anything to anybody? Who can prove that it is my duty? Let those gentlemen who have squandered their estates go to the devil! You all here want to *have*, but none of you to *work*. Any one of you might have gone to Lodz as I have done, and worked, and made his fortune, like me. Why didn't you? Because you then were all agog for your revolution. Ha ha! You Don Quixotes, you!" And he spat out scornfully (though dirtying himself in the act) and laughed and cackled with intense enjoyment.

Charles walked about the room, resolved not to speak a word; though every instant more and more indignant, he held his peace and feigned to be unconcerned, conscious he could not convince Bucholc, and unwilling to offend him.

Bucholc, aware he was annoying Boroviecki, for that very reason said all the most spiteful things he could, torturing him on purpose. That was a joy to him, and he felt a special relish when he could torment anyone, and "void his rheum" upon a human soul.

He lay, stretched out almost at full length in his easy-chair, with legs nearly scorched by the fire, which he was unceasingly poking with his stick to make it blaze; and with that greyish-yellow old face of his, like that of a decaying corpse, but out of which his red eyes glared with sneering malice. His round head, with the few wisps of grey hair that yet remained, stood out still more strongly on the dark ground of the arm-chair.

He scarcely ceased from speaking for an instant, mocking and reviling everything with increasing violence. He had all the seeming of an idol, swathed in tattered raiments, reposing upon his millions in the sanctuary of this his temple, scoffing

at all that was not Might, sneering at every emotion, and even despising humanity itself, when not backed by the power of millions.

The servant came in at last to announce dinner ready, and interrupt his flow of speech. Two men carried him out in his arm-chair and into the dining-room, situated at the other end of the flat.

"You are a good listener, you are no fool!" he said to Charles, walking beside him.

"What I heard was all extremely interesting, and I have been much entertained by it, as affording material for the pathological study of millionaires," he answered seriously, looking Bucholz full in the face.

"Mr. — Don't tilt me over so, you!" he yelled to the servant who carried his chair on one side; — "Mr. Boroviecki, I respect you a great deal; shake hands. We understand each other, and can hit it well off together. You may rely on me!"

Mrs. Bucholz had come to the dining-room before them. When they placed her husband at the table, she kissed him on the head, at the same time giving him her hand to kiss, and sat down at the other end.

The doctor was there also; he came up to Charles and introduced himself.

"Hamerstein.—Dr. Julius Gustavus Hamerstein," he added emphatically, stroking his long, tow-coloured beard, which went half down to his waist.

"Doctor of homœopathy and vegetarianism," said Bucholz—"that fellow costs me four thousand roubles a year; smokes my very dearest cigars, and promises either to kill or to cure me."

The doctor would have qualified this assertion but for Mrs. Bucholz's asking them in a very low voice to sit down to dinner, which a footman was just bringing in.

The conversation was carried on in German.

"Are you not a vegetarian?" Hamerstein inquired, poking his beard out from the napkin that enveloped it.

"Why, no. I am in full possession of all my faculties," was

Boroviecki's flippant reply. The man's appearance, flabby, paunchy, with a big face and an enormous bald head that shone like a newly cleaned saucepan, was singularly distasteful to him.

Hamerstein, with a gesture of impatience and an offended manner, eyed him through convex blue spectacles and answered stiffly: "No truth but is ridiculed at the outset."

"Are your adherents many in Lodz?"

"Only himself and my dogs; they have the mange, and the veterinarian has forbidden them meat," Bucholc said jeeringly, although he had himself nothing for dinner but oatmeal porridge, boiled with milk.

"I have written a treatise on vegetarianism, entitled *Natural Diet*, which I can send you."

"Thanks. I shall read it with curiosity, but doubt much whether you will make a convert of me."

"So at first said Mr. President too; and now——"

"And now you're a fool, my good Doctor," said Bucholc, "not to realize that when a man is ill, and all the medical faculty can do him no good, he's ready to try any quack doctor, any Father Kneipp, and even your electro-homœopathico-arsenico-vegetarian treatment."

"Because it alone is efficacious; because the homœopathical principle, *Similia similibus curantur*, is most perfectly adapted to man's nature and its method the only true one; as Mr. President here is experiencing very strikingly in his own person."

"So far, yes; but if I get worse, Doctor, be sure you'll get a thrashing and be flung downstairs with all your humbugging medicines."

"Whosoever brings new truths to the world must suffer martyrdom for them," the doctor replied sententiously.

"Martyrdom—fiddlesticks! Martyred at the rate of four thousand a year indeed! Martyred, with your fat face shining bright as a lantern!" The doctor raised his spectacled eyes to the ceiling, as calling it to witness his sufferings—and went on eating his oatmeal porridge. There stood before him a dish of salad with olive-oil, and one of potatoes.

The room was in silence. Noiseless servants flitted hither and thither like shadows, attentive to serve the company. One of them, on guard behind Bucholc's chair, at once gave him anything he indicated with a look.

"Kundel!" Bucholc would snarl at him, if he was slow or made any mistake.

Mrs. Bucholc, who sat at the other side of the table, took no part whatever in the conversation, such as it was. She ate most deliberately, chewing with her front teeth. Her smile was that of a waxen mask with pallid lips, and she gazed with glassy eyes on Boroviecki. Now and then she would set her lace cap straight on her grey hair, combed smooth over her yellow shrivelled forehead with sunken temples; or, with her sallow little wrinkled hand, fondle the parrot on the arm of her chair, looking for all the world like a mere bundle of multifarious colours. When she required anything, she would beckon to a servant, and either point to it, or whisper inaudible words. There she sat, not unlike a mummy; nothing that denoted life remained in her, except a few automatic motions.

The dinner was very simple, and—after the German fashion—consisted of little meat and plenty of vegetables. The table service, too, was poor: plate very much worn, chipped and damaged china, with doves painted round the borders.

There was cognac, but only for Boroviecki; wines there were, too, of several sorts, which Bucholc poured out for him, saying: "'Tis good wine, Mr. Boroviecki; drink it."

The dinner dragged on to its end in dreary taciturnity. It was a most oppressive silence. At times the parrot, disappointed in its expectation of food, would cry: "Kundel!" or Bucholc would mutter the same word to the servant. And every word, every sound, reverberated through the vast apartment, where a couple of hundred people might have found room enough—a room furnished with chairs and sideboards carved in Old German style.

The great Venetian window, that looked out upon factory walls, gave but scant light, and only on that part of the table

where they sat; the rest was plunged in murky brown shadow, out of which now and again footmen emerged in black livery. But the sun came to shine in at the corner of the window, and cast over half the table a streak of that reddish light which precedes sundown.

"Draw the curtains!" Bucholc cried; he objected to sunbeams, and felt much pleasure when the girandole with electric burners was lit.

At length, to the great relief of Charles, whom the silence and dreariness of the meal had almost put to sleep, the dinner came to an end. Old Mrs. Bucholc, as before, mechanically kissed the top of Bucholc's head, held out her hand for him, and then for Boroviecki to kiss, and went away. Charles, too, did not stay long, but after exchanging a few words with the doctor, left the place without waking his sleeping host. Save for Bucholc, who slept, and for a footman standing a few paces off, watchful and ready, the dining-room was empty.

Charles, once out in the street, the fresh air, and the bright sunlight, drew a long breath of relief. Bucholc's carriage was in waiting, but he sent it away, and preferred to walk, passing the factories and turning off from Piotrovska into an unpaved lane, that led out of town, and had along one side of it several big sombre tenements for workmen.

The view there was dismal and forbidding. Great two-storeyed stone barracks, entirely bare of any adornment, with red walls of miserable bricks that crumbled away in the wind, looked out upon a muddy, evil-smelling lane. Hundreds of small casements, in which a white curtain or some pots of flowers were at rare intervals to be seen, faced the massive bulks of the factories, straggling away on the other side of the lane. These all stood beyond a high fence and a row of tall poplars with withered branches and the aspect of a skeleton guard, separating those workmen's dwellings—catacombs of the living, so to speak—from the factories which, in the sabbath stillness, rose up noiseless and mute, but mighty in their greatness; basking like monsters in the

still sunshine, and reflecting the light from innumerable windows.

Boroviecki pushed on past those tenements, following his way over narrow foot-bridges and stepping-stones at times completely covered by the liquid mud that in places ran splashing like water, even to the ground-floor windows and on the doors opening on passages and corridors echoing with the cries and shouts and screams of children.

Having passed the tenements, he entered a long, narrow garden, that was separated by this lane from a wide expanse of open country in which scattered dwelling-houses and factory buildings were visible in the distance. From the plain there blew a cold damp wind rustling in the leaves of the hornbeam fences; at every gust the leaves, withered and dead, fell whirling down on to the soft black paths of the tiny garden. A tall one-storeyed house, inhabited by his fellow worker Murray, rose there. In that same house there was the dwelling assigned to Boroviecki by the factory: the whole of the first storey or of the ground-floor at his choice. But the place of abode was so very depressing that he felt an invincible dislike for it.

From the windows on one side you had a view of the workmen's courtyards: the front view showed the garden and the factories beyond. To the left it was the same thing: the last street on the outskirts, unpaved and with ditches several yards deep on either side, overhung by drooping trees of great age and about to die, being watered by the refuse of the neighbouring factories. Beyond these there was the sight of a great tract of waste land, full of holes, of stagnant ponds, of cesspools, tinted with the dyes that flowed from bleacheries and printing-rooms; of piles of rubbish, and dust-heaps dumped down there from the town, bricks from stoves taken to pieces, standing clumps of dead trees, traces of what had once been fields, masses of clay deposited there since the autumn before, huts made of boards roughly nailed together; and, close to the distant forest, a few tiny factories; which, with their crude red tints and their coarse, harsh outlines, were nothing less than an eyesore.

Such a Lodzian landscape simply could not be borne. So Charles had preferred to dwell in town in hired and not very convenient lodgings: but there he lived with friends, united to him not so much by real affection as by long acquaintance and an intimacy of many years.

Boroviecki was a chemical specialist in colours, Baum knew all about weaving and spinning, and Welt had gone through a complete course of commercial studies. The three were known in Lodz by various nicknames: some called them "Welt and the two B's"; others, "Baum and Co.," and others, "the Lodzian triplets."

Murray came out into the garden to greet Charles, and from a distance set to wiping his hands, always in perspiration, with a handkerchief no smaller than a napkin.

"I feared you would not come at all."

"Did I not promise?"

"There is a young Warsaw fellow at my lodgings; he has not been long here."

"What is he?" Charles asked, not much interested, taking off his overcoat in the lobby, hung to the very ceiling with engravings, chiefly of nude women.

"A business man. Wants to start an agency."

"The devil he does! Out of ten men you meet in the street, six have just come to found an agency, and nine to make a fortune."

Kozlovski, the man in question, rose nonchalantly to greet them from the sofa where he lolled, and then fell heavily back. He was drinking cup after cup of the tea Murray poured out for him.

The conversation soon became lively; Murray had been early in town and now told them all the news about the late bankruptcies and their results.

"A score of firms will fail; how far the bankruptcies are fraudulent or *bona fide*, we shall know later, Wolkman is shaky at any rate. Grosman, Grünspan's son-in-law, is considering what to do. Frishman, they say, had been waiting for just such an opportunity, and went down in a hurry; he was afraid before lest they should prevent him; his married

daughter's dowry is still due, and he had to make money. Travinski is said to be rushing from bank to bank; there's something wrong there.—You know him, Mr. Boroviecki."

"I was his fellow student in Riga."

"I say," Kozlovski exclaimed, stirring his tea, "this place is a very Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Mr. Robert," said Charles, not desirous of Kozlovski's opinion about Lodz, "I came here to see your new furniture; please show it to me."

They went to the opposite side of Murray's apartments.

"Why, this is indeed a storehouse of beauty," Charles cried, astounded.

"Pretty, isn't it?" Murray answered, proud and delighted to hear this praise; and when he had shown Charles everything, his pale eyes were beaming, and his mouth smiled from ear to ear.

There was a parlour elegantly appointed, and full of furniture upholstered in yellow, standing on a pale violet carpet, and hung with *portières*, yellow likewise.

"A fine combination of colours!" Charles cried, enjoying the effect of their harmonious blending.

"It's really nice, is it not?" Murray exclaimed, enraptured, and wiping more than once those hands of his that were to touch the curtains. His poor hunch was shaking and raising his coat, which he kept pulling down. "And this," he whispered with awe, "this will be Her room, Her boudoir!" ushering Charles into a tiny room, with tiny pieces of furniture and plenty of china bric-à-brac. At the window, there was a gilt flower-stand, laden with a number of hyacinth flowers of various colours and in full bloom.

"Why, you have not forgotten a single thing!"

"Because my mind is full of the matter," he said very decidedly, wiped his hands, pulled down his coat, and poked his long, bony nose in among the flowers, to inhale their fragrance.

At last he came to the bedchamber, and a small back-room. Each was well, perfectly well, fitted up, and upholstered with the greatest luxury. Anyone could see therein the

work of an expert in such matters, as well as that of a man greatly in love with his wife that was to be.

Returning to the parlour, Charles sat down, eyeing Murray with admiration. "One can see how deeply in love you are," he observed.

"Oh, I am—I am! If you knew how I am always thinking of her——!"

"And she of you?"

"Hush! There are subjects—too sacred—better not talk," he returned hastily, taken aback at the question. To conceal his confusion, he set to brush off a sofa some dust that was not there.

Charles said nothing, but lit a cigarette, and presently, feeling drowsy, ensconced himself in an arm-chair and smoked; and now let his eyelids droop, and now gazed out of the window up into the amethyst sky, with the dark factory chimneys at the horizon. He was in a fit of slumberous taciturnity.

So was Murray. He wiped his hands, pulled down his coat, stroked and pressed his massive clean-shaven jaw, and then riveted his gaze on the pattern of pale marguerites in the centre of the carpet.

Boroviecki, striving to keep awake, reached out for and again lit a cigarette; but his hand fell like lead on the arm of his chair.

Murray was dreaming of the bliss to come, and living on the hope of wedlock in the future. His gentle, almost womanly soul was wandering among the thousand gim-cracks and trifles that filled the apartment, and enjoying in advance the pleasure his wife to be would derive from them. He felt like talking, but seeing Boroviecki sound asleep, and unwilling to disturb him, as well as weary of sitting there, he let the blind down, took the still burning cigarette out of Charles's hand, and went out on tiptoe.

Kozlovski was singing and strumming the piano.

"Will you sing me a love-song—a very, very passionate one, burning with love? I'll pour you out some more tea," said the Englishman.

"From what operetta?"

"Oh, no matter; I am fond of songs of very passionate love, and of those only."

Kozlovski very willingly began singing some melodies that were at the time favourites in Warsaw.

"I don't mean that sort of thing," Murray said; "I do not know your language well enough to explain—but I should like something most sweet and most beautiful.—What you sang just now was common, vulgar——"

"Pardon me; I have sung them in the best *salons* in Warsaw!"

"I expressed myself badly. They are pretty, but—please sing something else."

Kozlovski proceeded to hum under his breath some bits from his inexhaustible store—songs by Tosti. All those he knew he sang with indefatigable zest; his faint tenor voice, intentionally softened, yet with a metallic ring in it, was melody itself.

Murray, quite entranced, forgot all and everything: forgot to pour out the tea, forgot to wipe his hands, to pull down his coat. He only listened, and with all his soul, to those ditties, now sweet and passionate and full of fire, now breathing the profoundest melancholy. With all his being he listened, his eyes filling with tears of ecstasy, and his ape-like features agitated with strong emotion.

CHAPTER VI



ORITZ WELT had, as Matthew told Boroviecki, left home at about eleven, creeping rather than walking along the sunlit street. So taken up was he with certain financial combinations that he even failed to notice acquaintances bowing to him on the way; and he viewed both thoroughfares and passers-by with his eyes only, not with his mind.

"How shall I—how can I—work it out?" he said, his thoughts ever coming back to the same point.

The sun shone bright over Lodz and its thousand chimneys. These now stood erect, in the hush of the day of rest, high in the air, at present clear and undefiled by smoke—red-brown pillars, like gigantic pine-trunks, with the azure of heaven and the air of spring all round them.

Multitudes of workmen, dressed up in bright-coloured Sunday clothes, with very glaring neckties, or tall hats of a fashion long out of date, and with umbrellas in their hands, came flooding Piotrovska Street, pouring into it in long lines from cross-roads and by-ways, jostling one another with the ponderous heaves of crowds that passively take and give every impact and every push. Working-women, too, arrayed in hats of astonishingly gaudy hues, in gowns well cut to their figures, in short bright-coloured capes; or (some of them) checked shawls over their shoulders, and hair neatly combed out and smooth, glistening with pomade and gold hairpins, and even in certain cases adorned with an artificial flower or two. These tripped along leisurely, elbowing their way through the crowd, and by this means often warding off injury to their stiffly starched dresses, or to the sunshades, held open above their heads, which like gay butterflies of

many a colour, fluttered over the grey ever-flowing stream of humanity, constantly growing, as it rolled on, with the affluents from the side streets.

They raised their eyes sunwards, and inhaled the sweet breath of spring in the air, yet walked on with dull, plodding steps, ill at ease in their holiday clothing, confused by the relative stillness of the streets, and by that very freedom of the Sunday rest, with which they did not know what to do; they walked on with dazed, staring eyes, dimmed by the splendour which shone down on them, and in whose blaze that multitude of faces—chalk-white, sallow, leaden-coloured, clay-coloured, wizened, and bereft of blood—blood sucked out of them by the factory—looked more miserable still. If they stopped, it was to look at the shop-fronts, gay with shoddy clothing; or else they made in Indian file for the tavern.

From roofs, from gutters out of repair, from balconies, streams of water poured down on the heads of those below, and on the muddied side-walks. The snow which had fallen the previous day was melting, running down the façades both of mansions and of common dwellings, painting long, black streaks upon those walls, dingy with coal-dust and with soot.

The pavement, abounding in holes and cracks, was coated with viscid mud, splashed from the carriages and cabs on to the side-ways and the people walking there.

Further, on both sides of the street there rose serried ranks of houses of every description: palaces in the Italian style, used as cotton warehouses; common blocks of building, foursquare, three-storeyed, provided neither with plaster nor with rough-cast; magnificent houses—baroque balconies of gilt iron, wrought in undulating curves, wanton with Cupids beneath the friezes and under the windows—through which you could see a row of weavers' looms. Then there were tiny houses of wood, all awry, with green moss-grown roofs; and in the courtyard behind them rose tall chimneys and factory buildings, beside a palace in the ponderous Berlin-Renaissance style: red moulded brick door-posts and lintels

of stone, and great bas-reliefs along the frontage (allegories of Commerce), and two turreted pavilions on either side, separated from the main building by a splendid iron grating, in the rear of which stood the colossal walls of some factory. There were houses, in size and grandeur vying with museums—warehouses for stuffs finished. Some were overcharged with ornaments in various styles: Renaissance caryatids on the ground-floor, sustaining a gallery in Old German style above; while the second storey, *à la* Louis XV, smiled down upon all this with wavy lines about the window-frames; the whole topped by a bulging frontage, embellished with something like cotton reels. And others again rose with lofty walls, adorned with majestic severity, like a temple to some god; and upon these were fixed marble tablets, with names engraved thereon: Shaya Mendelsohn, Herman Bucholc, etc.

The place was a hotch-potch, a Babel of all styles of architecture, jumbled together by the mason's art; bristling with turrets, plastered over with stucco decorations constantly peeling off, pierced with innumerable casements, and abounding in stone balconies, in caryatids on the so-called ornamental fronts, in balustrades upon roofs, in grand doorways where liveried janitors slumbered in velvet-covered easy-chairs, in mean doorways through which the street mire dribbled into horrible yards, as foul as dung-heaps; in stores and offices, in warehouses and poor shops and booths full of dirt and shoddy; in first-class hotels and restaurants; in the most loathsome dens, outside of which groups of wretched beings were basking in the sun; in Opulence, rolling along the street in gorgeous carriages, drawn by the best American fast trotters, at ten thousand roubles apiece; and in Destitution, slouching through the same street, with livid, desperate mouth, and the sharp-set ravenous eyes of eternal hunger!

"A marvellous town," Moritz thought, stopping at the corner of Meyer's Passage, and gazing with half-closed eyelids on the interminable lines of houses, jutting forward upon the street. "Oh, a marvellous town!" he repeated, adding in

self-mockery, "But where do I come in for it?" as he strolled to a coffee-house, almost full already.

"Coffee here!" he called out to the waiters rushing about in every direction, found an empty seat, looked mechanically through the *Berliner Börsen Courier*, and then again fell to musing about, first, where he could get money from; and then how to get the most he could out of the contract made with his two friends.

Moritz was a Lodzian shark to the backbone, and so could feel no twinge of conscience preventing him from doing a good stroke of business, even at the expense of his friends, provided this "good stroke" could be made without any trouble to himself. He lived in a world where cheating, fraudulent bankruptcy, and every kind of swindling and speculation were the order of the day. All that they swallowed greedily, for it was their food; they related clever tricks of knaves with real envy; anecdotes, better and better still, were told and repeated about the coffee-houses and taverns and places of business; public frauds were held up to admiration, and millions—no matter where they came from—were looked upon with reverence and with awe. Whether a man had earned or stolen those millions mattered not one jot to anybody, provided he had them. Bunglers and men who had no luck were jeered at and severely judged; they could get no credit, and were distrusted everywhere. But a successful man had the world at his feet. He might, on a given day, go into bankruptcy, and pay twenty-five roubles in the hundred; the next day the very men he had swindled would offer him still more credit than before: they meant to make up their losses by a bankruptcy of fifteen per hundred!

Moritz was considering how to profit by his partnership, and how to make other profits independently.

"To buy something for our company, but only to make a show—and buy on my own account as much as I can!"—The idea had been present to him all the forenoon. He jotted down columns of figures on the marble table he was sitting at, crossed them off, rubbed them out, and wrote again indefatigably, indifferent to what was going on round him.

From between the heads of two men opposite him at the same table a hand was thrust forth to him, which he grasped, though he could not perceive its owner.

"Morning!" he answered to the other's greeting, and returned to work out the most impossible calculations.

He could find neither money, nor means to get any. By founding his agency he had exhausted what credit he had. More he could not possibly obtain, unless his note of hand was backed by a good signature. "And who would be my surety?" he thought.

"Coffee!" he again called out to the waiters who, amid the noise and confusion that filled the coffee-house, were going about with trays of coffee and tea, held over their heads.

A cuckoo-clock struck one. People were beginning to leave now: it was the best time for a walk. Moritz still remained seated. He passed his fingers through his handsome beard, soft as velvet, and fixed his glasses firmly on his nose. His eyes flashed.

Old Grünspan—Grünspan, owner of a factory of woollen scarves, firm Grünspan & Lansberg, and a near relative, being his maternal uncle—had occurred to him. He resolved to see the man, to get his signature if he could, and if not, to take him as a partner.

His joyful delight at having found someone did not last long, however. For it also occurred to him that this Grünspan had ruined his own brother and compounded with his creditors time and again. It was by no means safe to do business with such a fellow.

"A trickster and a cheat!" he muttered sulkily, feeling that such a signature would be worthless. Still he resolved to try.

Looking round the coffee-room, a long, dark chamber, now almost empty, save for a dozen or so of youngsters, attentively reading the papers: "Mr. Rubinroth!" he called out to a young man who, sitting under a looking-glass, and holding a glass in one hand and a cake in the other, was perusing a newspaper spread out before him.

"Here you are, sir!" cried Rubinroth, springing to his feet.

"Anything particular?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"You should have reported this morning."

"Well, sir, as there was nothing to report, I thought——"

"You are to do as you're bid, not think; that's none of your business. I told you once for all to report to my lodgings every morning. News or no news—that does not concern you. You are paid to report, and must do so. You could surely have got here in good time for your cake and newspaper."

Rubinroth was loud in self-justification.

"Don't raise your voice; we're not in a synagogue," he said tartly to his employee, and hurried out into the street.

The sun was shining warmer and brighter than ever. The crowds of workers were there no longer; others had taken their place on the side-walks: well-dressed people, ladies in fashionable hats and costly mantles, men in black overcoats and ulsters, Jews wearing long frock-coats bespattered with mud, and Jewesses—pretty for the most part—in velvet gowns that trailed on the miry pavement. It was a noisy scene. There was a good deal of pushing and jostling as they went their way; and of laughing, too.

Outside the pastry-cook's at a street corner there stood a group of juvenile office clerks, staring at the array of women who passed, and making remarks aloud, rather foolish than pleasant, and every now and then bursting into a horse-laugh; for Leo Cohn was present, standing by, making his usual jests, at which he laughed more loudly than all the rest.

"Ah, Moritz, come round to us!" Leo shouted on seeing Welt.

"Let me be! I don't care for fools in the streets," he said with a growl, and passed on, disappearing in the throngs about the New Market-place.

The numerous scaffoldings in front of the houses either newly building or under repair forced everybody to leave the side-walks and trudge through the mud.

Beyond this New Market-place there were Jews and working people all about, making for the Old Town.

And here the mud was growing blacker and more liquid, and the side-walks differed in front of every house. In one place they were broad and paved with flagstones; in another they ran along in thin strips of asphalt trodden by many feet; or they changed into tiny stones, nestling in mud, sharp and painful underfoot. Sometimes waste products and factory refuse came pouring down in dirty streamlets, reddish or bluish or yellowish; and the flow of offscourings from the houses and the factories behind them was so abundant that they brimmed over the kennels, which were neither wide nor deep, and deluged the foot-paths with a many-coloured flood—even to the much-trodden thresholds of the wretched little shops. And out of these came, from mire-befouled and dingy recesses, a mingled stench of filth and putridity, and the strong odours of herrings, rotting vegetables, or spirits.

These grimy old dilapidated hovels, with the plaster peeling off and showing the bare red brickwork, like open wounds, were sometimes built of wood, or with so-called "Prussian walls"—bricks set in timber frames—that were giving way and going to pieces about the doors and windows, with frames all awry and sagging—hideous carcasses of dwellings. At other spots, there had grown up enormous buildings with multitudinous windows: unplastered as yet, without balconies and having only makeshift windows, but swarming with humanity, and loud with the clatter of work in spite of the day of rest; with the whirring of many looms, busily preparing shoddy goods to export to Russia, and with the shrill grinding sound of spinning-machines winding yarn on spools for hand looms.

In front of these endless rows of houses, red with their sombre walls of brick, and towering above those other masses of rank decay—hideous wrecks of petty trade and of the tradesmen's lives—there stood lofty piles of bricks and of timber, narrowing the street, already far too narrow, filled with carts, horses, goods for transport, tumult, the loud bawling of tradespeople, and the many voices of workmen going

on to the Old Town. These plodded on, either in mid-street, or about the side foot-paths, the bright hues of the mufflers they wore round their necks giving some touch of colour to the general tones of the street—grey, sad, dull, sombre.

The Old Town and all the streets that led to it were lively with the usual Sunday animation.

In the Grand Square—surrounded by tall and ancient houses that never had undergone restoration, and were now filled with shops, taverns, and what are named beer-halls—there had been set up a great number of unsightly booths and sheds; and round about these thousands of people were thronged together—talking, screaming, cursing—and now and then fighting. A chaotic tumult rolled in billows of sound from side to side of the square, over that great swarm of human heads, of dishevelled locks, of uplifted hands, of horses' manes, of butchers' axes gleaming on a sudden in the sunlight over the meat they were going to chop; of fabulous-sized loaves, carried on the head because of the throng; of the kerchiefs—yellow, green, red, violet—waving like flags above booths of wearing-apparel, caps, hats, and boots, seen hanging on pegs; and of the woollen mufflers that flapped in the wind and flicked the faces of such as came too near.

This uproar resounded everywhere: amongst the tin utensils, glittering in the sunlight; amongst the piles of fat bacon, and the many pyramids of oranges on the hucksters' stalls, so strongly and brightly contrasting with the dark colours of the men's garb—and with the mud—the mud which, trod underfoot, and trampled and churned ropy and slabby, splashed and spirted over the stalls and over men's faces, and poured along, out of the square into the kennels, and thence to the streets at the four corners. Along these there slowly rolled huge drays, laden with barrels of beer; butchers' carts, covered with filthy cloths, or displaying afar the red and yellow flesh of flayed oxen; carts piled high with sacks of flour, and others crowded with poultry cackling volubly, or quacking ducks, or geese putting their heads out through the ladder sides of the carts and hissing at the pedestrians.

Occasionally, beside these endless lines of successive carts, some elegant equipage would come dashing past, bespattering people and carts, and the side-walks on which wretchedly poor old Jewesses were squatting, with their baskets filled with boiled beans, sweets, frozen apples, and children's toys.

In front of the shops, wide open and replete with customers, there had been placed tables, chairs, and benches, on which were displayed stockings, socks, artificial flowers, percale goods as stiff as cardboard, gaudy coverlets, and articles of cotton lace. At one corner of the square was a collection of yellow-painted bedsteads, of chiffoniers that would not close, brown-tinted to imitate mahogany; of faded mirrors, in which no one could see his face, but quite brilliant in the sunbeams; there were rocking-cradles, there were kitchen utensils as well, and close beyond them, sitting out of the mud on bundles of straw, were countrywomen in striped scarlet petticoats and girdles, selling butter and milk.

And between the carts and the hucksters' stalls, forcing their way through the mob, women came with large baskets full of white starched caps, that they tried on customers in the open street. In Crossway Street, close by the Market-place, there stood tables covered with women's hats, whose paltry flowers, rusty buckles, and dyed variegated feathers were seen on the background of the walls behind to tremble sadly in the wind. Men's outfits were likewise sold there, and tried on, either in the open streets, or in doorways or behind screens that in general did not screen at all. The working-women tried on jackets, aprons, nay, petticoats, with as little concealment.

The hubbub went on increasing, for fresh streams of purchasers were continually pouring in from the New Town, and the hullabaloo of husky voices swelled higher, mingled with the prevailing din of squeaking toy trumpets, squealing sucking-pigs, and clamorous geese; the seething cacophony of all these sounds combined rose into the clear sunny sky, which stretched out its azure blue canopy above them.

They were dancing to music in one of the taverns, and so

this hellish racket was at intervals relieved by the concertinas and violins striking up an Oberek dance, and by the stentorian shouts of the dancers. But presently these too were lost in the uproar of a free-for-all fight in the midst of the Market-place, close to the pork-butchers' stalls. Near a score of struggling men—a dense mass of legs and arms enlaced and entwined in fierce conflict, swayed to and fro, with whoops and yells, bellowing and howling, till they all toppled down together by the stalls into the mire, where they still fought and bit, striking and kicking lustily, with bleeding faces and arms and legs, roaring throats and rolling, furious eyes.

Upon all this the sun was shining, and flooding the whole place with torrents of warm light. It gave richness to the colours, touched with its gold those tired and miserable faces, smiled on the ruins, kindled glorious fires in the window-panes, the thin watery mud, and the eyes of those who stood basking in its glory before their doors; it gilded with beauty the ugliness which prevailed there, all things and all men, and it threw a glamour even into the voices which arose from booths and stalls and miry places, billowing round the market in mighty waves, rebounding from the house-corners and echoing down the side streets till they reached the factories in the near distance. And these stood raising skyward their tall chimneys, pregnant with silent menace; and from the windows—those eyes of theirs, bright in the sunbeams—they stared down upon the swarming multitudes of working-men.

Moritz pushed through the Market-place with great disgust, and went down Drevnoska Street, one of the most ancient in Lodz, and very quiet. It consisted of the cottages, now in decay, of the first Lodz weavers. Amid these there were still a few peasants' cabins, with loosened corner-stones; they stood, leaning askew, and partly fallen in, surrounded with small gardens, wherein some old cherry- and pear-trees planted close together were slowly dying. There had been a time when they had flourished and borne fruit; but since many a year, with the overshadowing factory walls on every

side, and the correspondingly and constantly greater difficulty in getting sunshine, open space, and fresh breezes, these trees—poisoned besides by the waste products of the dyeing-works that filtered into the gardens—were doomed to decay and oblivion, perishing slowly in melancholy and tragical abandonment.

In this street, too, there was mud more than ankle-deep. And further, at the very end, terminating in fields, some pigs were running loose in front of the cabins, rooting and nuzzling in the hardened soil where rubbish had been dumped down.

The cottages were scattered about in disorder—here in groups, there standing detached about the fields, on a soft boggy soil. It was here that the factory of Grünspan & Lansberg stood, separated by a strong railing from the street.

A large, one-storeyed house rose beside the factory.

"Is your master in, Francis?" Moritz inquired of the old workman who opened the door.

"He is."

"Anybody else?"

"They are all here."

"All? Who?"

"The whole gang," the man rapped out in a tone of contempt.

"It's lucky, Francis, that I'm in a good humour to-day, or I'd spoil your face for you. Do you understand?—Pull off my galoshes!"

"Oh, I understand. I was to have my face smashed, but as Your Honour is in a good humour, there'll be no smashing," the man replied with perfect simplicity, pulling the galoshes off.

"Good. Remember that, and get yourself a nip of vodka," said Moritz, quite appeased, and giving him a five-kopek piece.

But as he went in, the other spat after him, muttering: "Smash my face? The scurvy carrion!"

Moritz entered a large chamber, where about ten people were sitting round a big table. They had just done dinner,

for the table was not yet cleared. He silently shook hands with them all, then took a seat on a sofa in a corner, overshadowed by a fan palm.

"Why bicker so? We may as well talk things over quietly," said Grünspan, who was walking about the room with a velvet cap on his grizzled head.

A long beard fringed his round white face; his eyes were darting to and fro constantly and swiftly. In his hand, on which a signet-ring gleamed, he held a cigar, at which he puffed but seldom, puckering his full, red lips, and inhaling the smoke judiciously.

"Francis?" he called to the servant outside; "go to my study, and fetch a box of cigars that are moist. And, Francis, mind: this one is not to be lost; I am putting it on the stove."

"What's all the row about?" Moritz asked of Felix Fishbin, who was also one of the family, and now seated in a rocking-chair, rocking up and down amid clouds of smoke.

"A grand family 'playta' * feast!" he returned.

"I sent to Father to get his advice, and asked you all to come and tell my husband—for he won't listen to me!—that if he goes on doing business the way he does, we are ruined root and branch!" Thus, in great excitement, spoke an elegant and handsome young brunette in a sable-coloured hat, who was Mrs. Grosman, Grünspan's eldest daughter.

"How much does Lihacheff owe you?" Grünspan asked.

"Fifteen thousand roubles," Grosman replied.

"Where are the bills of exchange?"

"Where are they? All over Lodz they are.—I paid Groslik with some, then I paid for goods, and Kolinski for the new building. What's the use of talking? Lihacheff has come a cropper; they will be returned to me, and I shall have to meet them; they were backed with my own signature."

"Do you hear that, Father?" screamed Mrs. Grosman. "And that's how he always goes on. What—what on earth does he mean? Is this business? Call him a business man?"

* *Playta*—a Yiddish expression, meaning "bankruptcy."—*Translator's Note.*

No: he's an honest dealer, who tells us all: 'I am bound to pay what I owe!' None but a stupid boor who knows nothing of business can speak so!" Her voice had risen to a shriek, and in her great dark olive eyes tears of mortification, of anger and resentment were welling up.

"I am surprised at you, Regina!" her husband said. "You, such an intelligent woman, not to understand so simple a thing—and one besides on which not only business, but the very conduct of life depends!"

"But I do understand; no one better.—What I don't is why you should pay those fifteen thousand roubles, Albert."

"Because I owe them!" he answered in a low voice, his pale tired face bent forward, and an ironical, though mournful, smile flitting over his thin lips.

"Always the same thing! You bought materials on credit. Very well; you owe money for them. But you sold goods on credit the same way, and they owe you for them too. When they don't pay, and make a 'playta,' what are you to do? Must you still pay? What? Are you to lose that Frumkin may gain? What?" she cried, as red as fire.

An uproar followed.

"The man's no good!"

"O you great merchant! Ay! ay!"

"You ought to fail now—and gain fifty per cent thereby."

"Regina is in the right!"

"Don't play the honest fool now; there's a pot of money at stake."

They were all gesticulating at him with fiery faces.

Here Felix Fishbin put in his word, speaking listlessly from his rocking-chair. "Pay! pay!—That any ass can do; any Pole even is clever enough for that.—Oh, what an artful dodge!"

Here Grünspan junior, a university student, raised his voice in thunder to pierce the din. "Let us consider matters calmly—" he began, and struck on a glass with his knife for silence; but all in vain. Sigismund himself could not be heard for the noise and tumult. Meanwhile Grünspan senior paced the room, with looks of disdain at his son-in-law, who on

his side was casting glances of intelligence at Moritz. The latter was, not very patiently, awaiting the result of the family council, and, while scrutinizing the old man, debating whether to trust him or not.

He very much desired to do so, but the desire grew weaker as he waited and watched old Grünspan. Reflection came, and with it an unaccountable sense of shame, when he recalled Charles and Max. Moreover, he dared no longer put trust in Grünspan: that cunning round face made him uneasy as he watched him. And those eyes! they seemed to pass from one to another of all the company with such a crafty, knowing expression!—from Fishbin's trousers, appraised by him as the young man rocked in his chair, to the heavy gold watch-chain (the weight of which he seemed to be calculating) of Albert Grosman, now sitting with uplifted head and eyes on the ceiling, as if he heard nothing of the riotous noise around him, raised by his wife and her relations to forbid him to pay and force on him a shameful 'playta'; and then to the big pocket-book, in which Landau, an old Jew with a carrotty beard on his face and a round silken cap on his head, was anxiously seeking for something or other.

No. Moritz felt every moment less and less trust in the man.

"Hush, hush, good friends, please, and let's have a cup of tea," Grünspan called out, as soon as the maid had brought in the bubbling and hissing samovar; then, in lordly tones: "Ask Miss Mela to do the honours," he commanded Francis.

A slight lull followed.

Mela came in, bowed to the company, and proceeded to pour out the tea.

"This affair is sure to make me quite ill," Regina said, wiping her eyes. "My heart is ailing, and I have not a moment of peace."

"Well, since you go to Ostend regularly every year, you will now have something to go for!"

"Grosman, none of that! She is my daughter!" said Grünspan, his voice raised in stern rebuke.

"Mela, you have not greeted me," Moritz whispered, sitting down by the side of the youngest daughter of the firm Grünspar & Lansberg.

"Why, did you not see me bow to you all?" she said, passing a cup to Sigismund.

"I had rather you bowed to me in particular," was his reply, as he stirred his tea.

"Does that matter to you?" she queried, raising her melancholy greyish-blue eyes and her face to him. She was very lovely, with wonderfully regular features.

"Does it matter? I dearly wish you would take some little notice of me, Mela. I delight so much in seeing and talking to you."

A smile curved her pouting lips, very fair to see, and like in colour to the pale coral of Sicily. She answered nothing, but poured some tea into a saucer, out of which her father drank, still continuing to pace the room.

He saw that smile. "Have I said anything ridiculous?" he asked.

"No. I was only reminded of what Mrs. Stephanie said this morning. It appears you told her last night at the play that you could not flirt with Jewesses; that they did not appeal to you. Did you?" and she looked at him steadily.

"I did. But what of that? First, I never flirt with you; and then, you have nothing in you—no, nothing whatever—of the Jewish type. On my word of honour!" he added, for he saw the same smile on her lips once more.

"That means I am to your liking. Thanks, Moritz, for your frankness."

"Does it offend you?"

"Why, no. It leaves me quite indifferent," she replied sternly, and her voice made him look her way in surprise. But her face gave no explanation, for her eyes were bent on the saucer she was just filling anew.

"Let us look at things calmly," Sigismund was for a second time saying, combing meanwhile his copper-coloured beard with a tiny comb.

"Why talk?" Mrs. Grosman exclaimed. "Father, tell Albert

plainly that the way he manages affairs will bring us to real bankruptcy in a year. He won't hear me, because of his philosophical principles, as he calls them; but just tell him, Father, that though a doctor of philosophy and chemistry, he is a silly man to throw his money away."

"Better tell her, Father, if you please, not to interfere with matters she does not understand, and not to worry me with her noise, for I begin to have quite enough of it."

"And that's how he speaks to me, for all my goodness and kindness? What?"

"Be quiet, Regina!"

"I will not be quiet. Money—*my* money is at stake.—I tire him! He has enough of me! Oh, what a fine gentleman—of Lodz! Oh yay! Oh yay!" she screamed with ironical spite.

"Let him compound—pay fifty per cent," said old Landau, gravely.

"Why pay anything at all? Pay nothing. Will Frumkin give us back one farthing of what's our due?"

"Regina, you do not understand. Grosman, will you show us your assets and liabilities?" said Sigismund, unbuttoning his university coat.

"Twenty-five per cent is the utmost he should give," Grünspan senior said, blowing into his saucer.

"There's a more excellent way," Fishbin remarked, puffing at his cigar.

No one answered him; they were all clustering round the table and bending over the papers scribbled over with figures that Sigismund added up swiftly.

"Liabilities, fifty thousand roubles," he called out.

"And how much has he got?" Moritz said out of curiosity, getting up from his seat; for Mela had left the room.

"That will be found later, when the settlement rate has been determined."

"H'm! the affair is quite feasible."

"As good as money in pocket."

"Regina, you need not be distressed."

Grosman, rising to his feet, said firmly: "So, you would

have me make a fraudulent bankruptcy! But as to my being a swindler, I shall not; don't think it."

"You must settle. Won't you? Then I redemand my dowry—with interest—and get a divorce. You're too fine a gentleman for me, so why should I trouble about you?"

"Hush, Regina. Grosman will settle for twenty-five per cent. Be easy. It's I who am in this affair, and will see to it all by myself," said Grünspan senior to comfort her.

"Albert has a screw loose somewhere," said Fishbin to Moritz; "where may that be?"

"In the upper storey," Moritz replied impatiently, being anxious to get away and rejoin Mela.

"You want your portion? Take it. You want a divorce? You shall have it. You want the money I have left? Grab it. I am sick of remaining in this den of scoundrels! And with you, Regina, I shall never hit it off. You perpetually complained that you were ashamed to be seen in the street when you had no children; now you have four, you are just as displeased."

"Tut, tut! all that's your private business," the old man observed, putting his saucer down on the table.

"But she has never been satisfied with anything I have done; she's always wrangling."

"Have I not reason? Have I not a cause, when he wants me to drive out with those wretched hacks that everybody laughs at?"

"Oh, they will do all right; better people than you have gone afoot."

"But I want to drive, and I won't have those miserable horses."

"Buy some then; I can afford no others."

"You Jews, shut up!" Fishbin cried, rocking himself again.

"He has gone crazy!" she went on. "Does one need money to buy what is wanted? Has Wulff any money? And yet he's starting a factory. Has Bernstein any money?—Yet he's furnishing his house for a hundred thousand roubles!" she exclaimed, looking with dazed eyes from one to another of her family.

Albert turned his back on her, and looked out of the window.

The dispute recommenced, and soon came to its height. All were babbling together, leaning on the table, thumping it, tearing papers from each other's hands, ciphering on the oilcloth, inventing more and more disgraceful ways and means of making a "playta," abusing each other, jumping up from the table, sitting down again with a torrent of words: all those beards and faces, mouths and moustaches, were twitching and aquiver; so much excited were they by those figures showing how much money could be made; so furious with that idiot who stood with his back turned, and would not so much as hear of a "playta"!

Even Grünspan senior lost his composure, and set to argue at the top of his voice; Regina, worn out by emotion, lay on a sofa, weeping convulsively; Landau flung back the oilcloth, and set to cipher on the bare table with a piece of chalk, now and again giving vent to some grave remark; while Grünspan junior, flushed and all in perspiration, was loudest of them all, crying: "Let's come to an understanding!" and checking the columns of figures by means of the factory ledger, which Regina had brought.

Moritz was alone in taking no part in the clamour. He was seated under the fan palm beside Fishbin, who, lolling in his chair, puffed away at his cigar, and time and again cried out: "You Jews, shut up!"

"The operetta is hardly entertaining," said Moritz, much bored; and having by this time completely abandoned the idea of doing any business with Grünspan, he walked out to seek Mela.

He found her in the room of her grandmother, for whom all the family had the deepest respect and the most sedulous care.

The old woman sat in an easy-chair on wheels, near the window. She was not far from a hundred years old, paralysed and in her second childhood; her face was so puckered and shrivelled that not a trace of any expression remained. Nothing was to be seen there but a parchment-yellow skin,

in which two black eyes glittered like glass beads; on her head she had a dark wig covered with one of those coloured velvet and lace caps that Jewish women wear in small towns.

Mela was feeding her with beef-tea, which she put into her mouth by means of a tiny spoon; and her sunken cheeks and lips moved with fishlike gulps to take in the food.

Moritz made a bow. She stopped eating, looked at him vacantly, and spoke with a hollow voice that seemed to come from underground: "Who's this, Mela?"

She could no longer recognize any but her nearest relatives.

"Moritz Welt. Mother's brother.—Welt!" she repeated, stressing the word.

"Welt, Welt," the old dame mumbled between her toothless gums, and opened her mouth wide for the spoonful of beef-tea her grand-daughter was giving her.

"Are they still quarrelling?" Mela inquired.

"With a noise as on Atonement Day."

"Poor Albert!"

"Are you sorry for him?"

"Why, his very wife and our family won't let him act as a man. Regina," she added sorrowfully, with a sigh, "Regina really dismays me with those huckster's ways of hers."

"There are the makings of a good manufacturer in the man. Idealism is his illness. But after the first 'playta,' provided he gets enough out of it, he will be cured."

"I can understand neither my father, nor my uncles, nor you, Moritz, nor this town of Lodz. The very blood boils within me when I see what goes on here."

"What goes on here? It's all right. Lots of money made—and there you are!"

"But how made? by what means?"

"That's all one. The way a rouble is made does not detract one kopek from its worth."

"Now you are cynical."

"I am simply a man who does not blush to call things by their names."

"Let us drop the subject; I am too worn out even to dispute."

She had done feeding the old woman, whose pillows she patted and arranged for her, then kissed her hand.

The latter caressed her face with decrepit skeleton-like fingers, and asked once more, with her eyes fixed on Moritz: "Who's this, Mela?"

"Welt, Welt.—Moritz, come to me for a moment now, if you have time."

"I should always find time, Mela, if you would but let me."

"Welt, Welt," the old woman repeated, in a dull voice, and opened her mouth, and looked with dim eyes out of the window at the factory walls that she saw.

"Moritz, I have already told you to pay me no compliments."

"Believe me, Mela, I am speaking frankly. I give you my word, the word of an honest man, that whenever I see or hear you, I am forced—not only to speak to you as to no other woman, but to think and feel differently as well. In you, Mela, there is such a wonderful tenderness of heart, you are such a true woman—— O Mela! how few there are like you in Lodz!" He said all this earnestly, following her to her room.

"Will you please see me to Rose's house?" she asked, without replying to his words.

"If you wished me not to come, I would beg you to let me," he returned.

She pressed her brow against the window-pane, looking at the sparrows. Frantic with joy in this first day of spring, they were pursuing and fighting one another about the garden.

"What are you thinking of?" he whispered.

"Whether Albert will do as he intended, or as they wish."

"Of course he will declare himself a bankrupt and settle with his creditors."

"And I, who know him, am positive he will not."

"I'll bet you that he will."

"And I would give anything that he should not."

"True, Mela, Albert has got some philosophical bees in his bonnet. But, for all that, he's a shrewd fellow; and I'll wager all I have that he'll not pay more than twenty-five roubles in the hundred."

"Oh! and how dearly, how very dearly I do wish it might not be."

"Do you know, it strikes me it was you who should have married him. Mela, if you had, you two would have become beggars—but such holy ones, they would have exhibited you in a show-case."

"I am fond of him, but he is not the type of man I should care to marry."

"Well, who then is?"

"Try and find out!" And she smiled again, with that faint delicate smile of hers.

"Boroviecki, I am sure. All the women in Lodz are in love with him."

"No, no. To my mind, he is a cold, relentless fortune-seeker. Besides, he is too much like the rest of you."

"What of Oscar Meyer? Handsome, a baron, and a millionaire. His barony is indeed something of the Mecklenburg type, but his millionaireship is quite incontestable."

"I saw him once. He looked like a boor in disguise. They say he's a dreadful man."

"Yes. A wild passionate fellow, a regular Prussian brute!" he said, with hate in his voice.

"Is he? He begins to interest me then."

"Enough; he's a boor.—What do you think of Bernard Endelman?"

"Oh, he's quite a Jew!" she said contemptuously.

"Ah, how thoughtless I have been! Why, you were bred in Warsaw, and lived there in Polish society, and went about all the Polish *salons* and circles; how could Jews, or anyone in Lodz, be to your taste? You are so used to those dishevelled young students, those ranting Radicals all the

time on the look-out for a legacy or a sinecure, and to that exquisite atmosphere of flippant humbug, and polite wordy stabs at each other. Ha ha! I have been there too; and when I remember those days and people, I feel I could die with laughter!"

"Let them be, Moritz. You speak too bitterly to be impartial; and I will not listen to you," she snapped back, much hurt. For although she had lived in Lodz for a couple of years with her father, she still lived in spirit amongst those circles which he had just derided so mercilessly.

She went out, and presently returned, dressed to go to town.

Outside, an elegant open carriage was waiting.

"Only as far as the New Market-place, where there is less mud, and we shall get out."

The carriage set off at full speed.

"Do you know, Mela, you are a puzzle to me."

"How so?"

"Just by what you are. I know the women of our people well, I can and I do appreciate their good sides, but I know them, and I know that they do not (as you do) take seriously what is written in books.—You remember Ada Wasereng? Well, she too was in Warsaw, and in the same social set as you were. She also was just as enthusiastic about everything, and just as ardent to do things; and she, just like you now, used to dispute with me about freedom and equality, and virtue, and the ideals of life."

"That's just what I do not do," she interrupted.

"That may be; but let me go on.—She was the most idealistic of idealists. But after she got married to her Rosenblatt—well, she forgot all about that nonsense. Idealism was not in her line any more."

"And you like that, do you?"

"Yes. You see, when she had time at home afterwards, she amused herself with poetry. Why should she not amuse herself? Poetry is esteemed in Polish houses, it gives a fashionable tone, and is besides not so tiresome as balls and plays."

"So it is only an amusement in your eyes?"

"I don't say it of you, or of Polish women—you and they are of a different sort—I am speaking of the Jewesses. Yes, for them it is nothing more. Consider: what on earth more can it be to them? I am a Jew, Mela, and am not ashamed to say so, anywhere and at any time; what should I gain by denying it? I, like all our people, care for nothing beyond my own interest; it is not in my blood to care. See, there's Borowiecki; a strange fellow he is! My schoolfellow in Warsaw, my fellow student in Riga, and my friend. We have lived together for so many years, and I thought I knew him for one of us. His claws are sharp, he's a man of Lodz—quite!—and a better business man than myself. And yet he at times does unaccountable things, things none of us would ever do. He is a Lodzian indeed; and notwithstanding, he has now and again such idealistic fancies, such impractical dreams, for the sake of which, if he had but two roubles in his pocket, he would give one—and for which I would give five kopeks, and only provided there were no means of avoiding the gift."

"But what does all this tend to?" she asked, touching the driver with her parasol to make him pull up.

"To point out that you have in your nature something like what the Poles have too."

"May that not possibly be called a soul?" she said playfully, as she got out.

"Rather too large an order!" was the reply.

"Let's go along Srednia Street, I want to take a stroll."

"Well, but the shortest way is by Vidzevska, and then along Cegielniana."

"You will be sooner rid of me that way!"

"Mela! you know how much I enjoy your company."

"Because I listen so patiently to you?"

"Yes, and because, when you have your present ironical expression, you look quite pretty, quite pretty."

"Not quite pretty, this compliment of yours: too much of the wholesale dealer in it."

"You'd prefer Warsaw ones: retail, at short date, and good security."

"What I prefer is good breeding and honesty."

"To make sure of them, would you not like marriage articles as well?" he retorted maliciously, settling his glasses on his nose.

She felt offended. "Have you then been leading me on to this conclusion?"

"You asked for it."

"I only asked you to take me to Rose's house," she answered with strong emphasis.

"And I—would take you anywhere, if you were only willing," he cried, concealing with a smile the unaccustomed emotion which possessed him.

"Thanks, Moritz, but someone else shall do that," she retorted rather tartly. After which she ceased speaking, gazing silently and in dejection down the street, which was extremely deep in mud, on its dirty hovels, and on the faces of the numerous pedestrians.

Moritz, in a rage with himself and still more with her, walked on taciturnly, and throwing a moody glance, now at those who were going by, now on her pale face. With a sneer, he noticed the looks of commiseration with which she eyed the wretched little children playing on the sidewalks and in the doorways.

He understood her, but to an extent that compelled him to think her a very great simpleton. The insensate "Polish idealism," which he held to be part of her nature, annoyed him indeed; but at the same time there was, to the dry rigidity of the man's mind, something attractively fresh in the delicacy of feeling, and in the singular poetry—all grace and kindness—which emanated from her marble-white features, from her pensive expression, and from the whole of her slender form, so harmonious in its full-grown beauty.

"Have I been wearisome? You are so silent," were her first words after that long pause.

"I feared to be in the way. You were possibly thinking of things very great and lofty."

"You may be sure they were too lofty for any sneers of yours to reach them."

"Do you know what you have just done, Mela? Two things: snubbed me, and flattered yourself."

"Only one of them was in my intention."

"To snub me?"

"Yes, and I did it with pleasure."

He was somewhat hurt. "Do you then dislike me so much, Mela?"

"Oh no, Moritz," she said, and shook her head with a mischievous smile.

"But you do not love me, either, do you?"

"Oh, no, Moritz."

"Well, we are having a nice little flirtation, are we not?" he remarked, irritated by her tone.

"We are such near relations that it may pass; it does not mean anything."

Here she stopped to give a few groschen to an old hunch-backed beggarwoman, all in tatters, who stood by a railing, with a baby in her arms, and begged clamorously. Moritz looked on in mockery, but suddenly pulled a bit of money out of his purse, and gave it to the woman.

"And you, too, give to the poor?" she asked, much astonished.

"I have ventured on a charitable transaction, happening to have a bit of bad money by me."

"You are an incurable cynic!" she said, walking on a little faster.

"I might be cured. I have time enough; if I only had the opportunity—of being treated by such a doctor as you——"

"Good-evening, Moritz."

"So soon? I am sorry."

"Not I.—Will you be at the Colony this evening?"

"Can't say. Am leaving Lodz to-night."

"Do go there, give my love to the girls. And tell Mrs. Stephanie I shall be at her shop to-morrow forenoon."

"All right; then in return, please give Miss Rose my compliments—and tell young Müller he is an ass."

They shook hands and parted. His eyes followed her, as she entered the gateway of the Mendelsohn palace.

The sun now was setting, and had sunk behind the town; but the blood-red fires in the western sky were reflected from a thousand casements. And soon, in the twilight, Lodz was hushed, and seemed sinking into the ground; so many and many houses and roofs were merging into one huge, flat, grey, indistinguishable mass, only just marked out by the streets, where the gaslights were beginning to appear in lines interminably long; and by the tall factory chimneys, that—rising like a mighty forest of red tree-trunks, standing up above the town, and seemingly swaying and quivering against the bright horizon—still flamed with all the glories of the west.

"A moonstruck girl!" thought Moritz. "I'd like to marry her, though. 'Grünspan, Lansberg, and Welt': a good sound firm that would be! That must be thought over"; and he added, with a smile: "It would be a splendid stroke of business."

CHAPTER VII



HAT can be the matter with Moritz to-night?" Mela said to herself, as she walked into the great two-storeyed house at the corner, commonly called the Shaya palace.—"Ah, that's it! I have a dowry—fifty thousand roubles.—He must be in sore straits indeed; that's what makes him so loving all at once."

She had no time for further reflections; Rose Mendelsohn, her dearest friend, had rushed into the antechamber to meet her. She had a slight limp.

"I was just sending the coach for you, I wanted to see you so!"

"Moritz Welt accompanied me here; we walked slowly, and he paid me all manner of compliments."

"That Jew!" Rose ejaculated with scorn, as she was taking off her friend's things, passing hat, gloves, veil, and mantle to a footman as she did so.

"He sends you his sincerest congratulations."

"Silly man! He thinks I ought to know him when he bows in the street."

"Do you dislike him?" Mela said, looking at her dishevelled hair in the mirror between two of the artificial palms that adorned the room.

"I have detested him ever since Father praised him to Fabek; and Will detests him just as much. A good-looking puppet!"

"Is Wilhelm here?"

"We all are, and everybody here is bored to death, waiting for you."

"And Vysocki?" she inquired in a lower and not too firm voice.

They passed hand in hand through several rooms, dim in the gathering twilight, but gorgeously upholstered.

"And what are you about, Rose?"

"Oh, weary of everything, and pretending that people entertain me.—And you, dear?"

"I am weary too, but don't pretend I am not."

"A horrible life!" Rose sighed.

"And how long is this to drag on so?"

"How long? You know best. Till we die, perhaps."

"Ah, what would I not give to be able to love! What would I not give?"

"Why, you'd give your whole self—and your millions thrown in."

"No," she corrected, with a bitter intonation; "you meant to say: 'Your millions—with yourself thrown in!'"

"Rose!" Mela said in a reproachful tone.

"No, dear, you meant nothing of the sort"; and she kissed her fondly.

They entered a room of no great size. It had the look of a mortuary chapel, being quite black: the furniture was of black wood, the walls were covered with black silk damask, and the *portières* were of black plush. Two stark naked bronze figures of gigantic size stood bending backwards, to balance the branches of oddly twisted orchids which each held up in his sinewy arms, and from whose flowers of opalescent white crystal a misty glimmer was shed over the apartment. Upon the black sofas and arm-chairs there sat a good many people, in the most unconventional postures. One of the men even lay stretched out on the carpet that covered the whole floor. This too was black, and had an enormous nosegay of red orchids embroidered in the middle, so as to look like monstrously strange creatures, crawling about the room.

"Will! you might perform a somersault on the carpet, in honour of Mela's arrival," Rose observed.

Wilhelm Müller, a big blond fellow, clad in a smart sport suit, rose from his arm-chair, and performed three somersaults on the carpet, one after another, with all the perfec-

tion of a trained acrobat. Then he stood bowing round the room, just like a circus-man.

"Bravo, Müller!" cried the man who lay on the carpet, near the window; and he lit a cigarette.

"Mela, come here and kiss me," was the command of a girl very certainly out of her teens, who lay in a low rocking-chair, and lazily turned her cheek to be kissed. Mela obeyed, and went to sit down on a sofa near Vysocki. He was bending over a tiny rosy-cheeked fair-haired girl, whose feet were upon a stool. From time to time he brushed his coat-lapels, pushed his soiled coat-cuffs up his sleeves, or twirled his moustache energetically. He was saying:

"From a strictly feministic point of view, there ought to be no legal inequality between man and woman."

"Yes, yes," the girl said dolefully; "but, Mieciak, how very tedious you are!"

"Won't you say good-evening, Mieciak?" said Mela.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but Miss Fela will not let herself be convinced."

Here Rose swooped down upon him. "Mieciak, you must pay a double fine. First because you called Mela *madam*, and second, because you just called Fela *miss*."

"I shall pay, Rose, I shall pay at once." And he proceeded to look in all his pockets, unbuttoning his coat.

"Mieciak," Fela twittered, "please stop unbuttoning your clothes. That's shocking."

"If you have not the money by you," Mela said, "I'll pay."

"Thanks, but I have. Last night I was called to visit a sick man."

"Rose!" Toni called from her rocking-chair, "I feel bored, and I won't have it!"

"Will! do you hear, you lazy boy? Amuse Toni."

"I won't. Must lie down. Got a pain in my back."

"You? What pain can you have?"

"Oh," said Fela, laughing, "the same sort as you have, Toni!"

"We must give him a massage."

"How I'd like to take your photograph, Will! You look quite in high feather to-night," Rose said, in an undertone. Her large grey eyes were beginning to flash with a greenish phosphorescence. Her very large mouth, with thin lips, which she bit now and again, was like a long slash across her milk-white face with its transparent skin, surrounded as by an aureole of pure copper-red hair parted in the middle, and combed over her temples and ears; of these only the rose-red lobes were visible, and the great sapphires with brilliants set round them, that dangled in sight.

"You may photograph me, but in this attitude," Will cried, and threw himself down full length upon his back, his hands clasped behind his head, and laughing merrily with a pleasant voice.

"Girls, cluster round me! Come, birdies, come!"

"Why, he's quite a handsome fellow to-night!" Toni whispered, bending over his fair, young, and typically German face.

"Yes, he's young," Fela said.

"Do you not prefer Vysocki?"

"But Vysocki's legs: they are so very thin!"

"Hush, Fela, don't say such things."

"Why not?"

"Simply because they are improper."

"And why improper, my dear Rose? I know quite well how men talk about us. Bernard tells me everything. He told me such a funny story I nearly laughed myself to death."

"Tell it to us, Fela," Toni whispered, yawning; she was bored.

"Little one," Bernard protested from the carpet where he lay, "if you tell it while I am here, I'll never tell you anything again."

"Oho! he's ashamed of himself. Ha ha!" And she set to prancing about the room like mad, knocking down furniture, till she came up against Toni.

"Fela, what on earth are you up to?"

"I am bored, Rose, I am so bored I shall go mad!" And

she seated herself on one of the black plush-covered cushions which the footman had brought in.

"Now, where did you get that scar, Will?" she asked, passing a taper finger over a seam that gashed one side of his face, from the ear to the extremity of his short, scanty moustache.

"It's a sabre-cut," he returned, with a make-believe snap at her finger.

"About a woman?"

"Just so. Bernard will tell you all—he was my second, and made such a noise over the business that everybody in Berlin heard about it."

"Tell us, Bernard."

"Let me alone. Got no time," Bernard grunted; he was lying on one side in contemplation of the ceiling (painted over with nude winged nymphs that flew after Aurora's car) and smoking cigarette after cigarette, offered and lighted by a manservant in scarlet French livery, whose post was close to the door. "Besides," he added, "the affair is really too scandalous."

"Now, Will, you know that when we made arrangements for these gatherings of ours, we agreed to tell one another everything—everything!" and she advanced her arm-chair nearer to him.

"Speak, Wilhelm," said Rose, with an odd laugh, "you shall marry me as a reward."

"I might, Rose," Will answered, "for the sake of the devil you have inside you."

"And for my marriage portion, that is bigger still!" she said with a jeer.

"Oh, but you are all so tiresome!—Will, the pig! my dear Will! give us the pig!" Toni sighed, and stretched herself out on her arm-chair with such a jerk that one large button—an imitation cameo—flew off her bodice. Her sense of boredom was so excruciating that she begged and implored him in the tones of a teasing child: "Give us the pig, Will! Oh, give us the pig!"

Will got up from the carpet on all fours, curved his back,

and then, with short and stiff successive jerks, gave a very good imitation of an old pig's movements, with an occasional grunt.

Toni went off in roars of laughter, Rose slapped him vociferously; Fela, bubbling over with merriment, tapped the carpet with her heels; her short fair hair came undone, falling all over her merry, rosy face, and her head looked like a bundle of straw over a tavern door.

Mela, whose gravity had given way amid the general merriment, pelted Will Müller with cushions. He, every time he was hit, would throw out his hind legs in a funny way, and utter a long-drawn-out squeal. When he had enough of it, he jerked up and rubbed his back against Rose's legs: then, lying down in the centre of the carpet, he stretched his legs stiffly, and, like a weary pig, gave a snort and a grunt, and at last, with a feeble squeal, sank to rest.

"Excellent!—As good as good can be!" the young ladies screamed out; they were in ecstasies.

But Vysocki was staring aghast. He had for the first time witnessed such a scene of circus buffoonery—all to amuse some millionaires who were bored! He forgot to brush his coat-lapels or push back his cuffs, or twirl his moustache, but looked round at the women's faces, and muttered with disgust: "A merry-andrew!"

"From what standpoint?" Mela queried; she had been the first to return to her senses.

"From every standpoint of human nature!" he replied, sternly; then he rose, and looked about for his hat, into which Fela was trying to squeeze both her feet.

"Are you going, Mieciiek?" she asked, astonished at his sternness.

"I must go; I feel ashamed that I am a human being."

"François, kindly open all the doors: outraged Humanity is leaving us!" scoffed Bernard, who, during all the performance, had been lying still and smoking cigarettes.

"Rose, Mieciiek is offended and wants to go away; don't let him!"

"What's all this about? Why would you go?"

Doctor Vysocki's first indignation had evaporated; and, while attempting to get his poor top-hat clear of Fela's feet, he explained gently: "Because I am in a hurry; I promised to see somebody."

"Miciek, pray, pray don't go yet; you told me you would see me home," Mela whispered earnestly, and her marble-white face flushed with emotion.

He did not go, but sat on gloomily, leaving Bernard's gibes unanswered, and paying no heed to the jests (reminiscences of his *Burschen* days) made by Müller, who was once more sitting at Rose's feet.

A dead silence fell upon the company.

The electric lights, tremulous within the crystal flowers, flung a sort of powdery bluish gleam about the room—on the dull black walls, from which four Italian aquarelles framed in black velvet and suspended with silken cords looked forth like azure eyes; and on all those heads, wearied and worn by idleness. They gleamed upon the brass ornaments of the piano, that stood in one corner with the keyboard open, bearing some likeness to a monster with long, ivory teeth. The inside shutters were closed, the heavy *portières* let down; no sound of voices came in from without, except a faint murmur and dull feeble quiverings that went through the room, like weak and barely discernible pulsations.

The smoke that Bernard incessantly and voluminously poured forth was wafted about in a thin bluish-grey cloud, veiling Aurora's car and the nude figures around it, as it were with a tissue of the finest gauze; rolling along the walls and clinging to the textures of plush, it finally floated into the rooms beyond by the doorway, in which—like a sharp discord in that symphony of swarthy tints and shades—stood the manservant in his scarlet livery, at everyone's service.

"Rose, I am bored, bored, bored to death!" Toni said with a moan.

"And I," Fela cried, slipping Vysocki's top-hat off her feet, "I am enjoying myself immensely!"

"And I," Bernard put in sarcastically, "best of you all; for I don't at all need to be amused."

"François," Rose ordered, "bring the tea in!"

"Don't go away yet, Rose, I'll tell you the rest of the story." Will lifted himself on one elbow, and whispered to her, more than once with a kiss on the dainty lobe of her ear.

"Now, don't bite at my ear-ring! You kiss too hard, and your lips are so very hot!" she murmured, though bending her head down towards him, and biting her lips hard; while from underneath her heavy, half-closed, and discoloured lids there flashed again and again a phosphorescent gleam.

"And so, being terrified, he crossed himself," Will continued rather more loudly.

"What! Was the man a Catholic?"

"No, but he thought there wasn't any harm in being on the safe side."

She listened till the end of the story, but unsmilingly and without interest.

"Will, you're a good lad, a dear fellow," she said, stroking his cheek; "but your anecdotes are too tedious, too stupid—quite in Berlin style.—Now, I am back at once. In the mean time, Bernard, will you play us something?"

Bernard rose, pushed the piano-stool into place with his foot, and forthwith began to play with great spirit and *bravura*. Everybody at once cast off his depression, and was lively again. Wilhelm started up, and danced with Fela. The dance was fast and furious. Her hair fell down and fluttered about like wisps of straw in a high gale, coming over her eyes down to her chin, and streaming out behind her. She set it right with deft hands, and they danced till they could dance no more.

Toni, lying back in her chair, followed Will's motions, but with glances that told of her weary state.

The servant brought in several small ebony stands, inlaid with mother of pearl, which he put the tea-things on.

Rose got up lazily, and with a slightly halting gait, swing-

ing her wide hips from side to side, walked towards the door. She was stopped on the way by Vysocki, who said in an undertone: "I assure you, madam, in all this there is nothing of decadence; it is something quite different."

"What is it then?" Mela inquired, catching hold of Vysocki's hands lest he should fall to brushing his coat-lapels or pushing back his cuffs.

"Oh, how I should love to be a decadent!" Toni exclaimed. "Mieciek, can't I become a decadent? Mieciek, I want so to be a decadent, for everything does bore me awfully."

"This is simply the laziness which results from too much time and too much money. Boredom is a complaint that only the rich suffer from. You are bored, Mela, Rose is bored, Toni is bored; so is Fela. And along with you those two shallow-brained fellows are bored as you are; and outside your circle one half of the wives and daughters of our millionaires are bored likewise. Everything bores you; why? Because you can have all that is to be bought. Nothing matters to you, except to be diverted; and the wildest diversions you can enjoy must end in vexation of spirit—in boredom. Now, from a social standpoint——"

"Mieciek, you do not think bad of me?"—Mela interrupted him stroking his hand.

"I admit no exceptions. You too belong to a degenerate race, to a race which lost all contact with nature. And life takes its revenge on you——"

"Mela, listen to him, and he will teach you that, from every one of the 'standpoints' known to him, the greatest crime in the world is to have money."

"Come here, Rose, and sit with us."

"I shall, in a minute; but I must first look in and see Father."

Leaving them, and passing through the hall, already illuminated with electric girandoles, she went upstairs to her father's study, which was nearly dark.

Shaya Mendelsohn, attired in the ritual vestments prescribed for prayers, and with a phylactery strapped upon his bared left arm, according to the canons, was sitting in the

centre of the room, saying prayers in a low voice, and bending his head reverently.

Two old men with white beards, official singers in the synagogue, and clad in the same ritual vestments as Shaya, with white and black stripes alternately, were availing themselves of the last radiance of sunset that still remained in the sky, to pour out a weird, fervid, and singularly mournful chant, accompanied with numerous bowings and bendings. The voices were pregnant with complaint and sorrow. Now they sounded like brazen trumpets, venting sonorous sadness; now they swelled with sombre despair, or broke out into hopeless lamentations. At times they would rise to a shrill piercing cry, with long reverberations in the silence of the dwelling; at others again they would sink into a melody of soft liquid tones, making one think of flutes played in the profound calm of blossoming gardens, amongst shady places exhaling ambrosial fragrance, in a slumberous region haunted by dreams of ecstatic love, into which there crept the sighs of melancholy longing—for the palm-tree gardens of Jerusalem—for the illimitable wailing wilderness—for the burning sun of the south—for the lost and well-beloved land of their fathers!

Their bowings became more and more frequent and in more perfect time; their eyes glowed with rapture, and their long, grey beards trembled with emotion. They felt themselves inebriated by the sound of their own voices, and the movement of the chants that welled out of their breasts into the empty room, so quiet and so dim; that sobbed and entreated and implored, now thrilled and penetrated with the sadness of their affliction, now glorifying the goodness and the power of Him, the Lord of lords!

Outside of those windows, all was at rest. The great rabbit-warrens of the workmen's dwellings, on the opposite side of the street and over against Shaya's study, were beginning to twinkle with lights on every floor. From the other windows (as the room occupied one whole corner of the house) the park was seen, with a thickly planted grove of fir-trees, that separated the mansion from the factories; and there,

glimmering white through the deepening dusk, lay patches of yet unmelted snow, amongst the low shrubs on the lawns.

Shaya, sitting in the centre of his room, had in front of him a large window, built into the angle, whence his gaze could plunge outside, viewing the huge outlines of his factories, bristling with chimneys and with low corner buildings that stood at angles suggesting a mediæval fortification. Shaya was praying fervently; yet he could not help gloating over those mighty walls, now fading into the blackness of the night, whose dark mantle was seen in the distance falling over the city, and above it her mild peaceful face, that looked down from millions of stars.

The chants went on, until it was quite dark. The singers then put away their ritual vestments into velvet bags, on which certain Hebrew letters were embroidered in gold.

"Mendel, here is a rouble for you."

Shaya gave him a piece of silver, which Mendel examined with care by such light as still came through the casement.

"Yes, look well; it is no counterfeit.—But you, Abraham, I give you only seventy-five kopeks to-day. You were in no mind to sing, and your chant was only a make-believe. What! did you think to take me in—and God into the bargain?"

Abraham looked at Shaya with eyes full of tears and still glowing with ecstasy, took up the rouleau of coppers, bade him farewell, and disappeared noiselessly. All this time Rose had been standing in the doorway, listening to the chants. She was so impressed as several times to give way—almost but not quite—to a burst of laughter.

No sooner had the singers withdrawn than, touching a button, she flooded the room with light.

"Rose!"

"Anything you want?" she said, sitting down on the arm of her father's chair.

"Nothing. Is your company here?"

"All of them."

"Enjoying themselves?"

"Barely so. Müller himself is tedious to-night."

"Then what do you keep them for? You can always get merry people here. If you like, I'll drop a word to Stanislas, and he will order some for you; plenty of gay fellows in Lodz. Why should you be bored, and pay for it into the bargain?—And the man Vysocki: what of him?"

"He's a doctor. Quite a different sort from our Lodz men; an aristocrat by birth, his mother a countess. And he has a coat of arms."

"A coat of arms—and nothing besides! Do you like him?"

"Oh, fairly well; he's so different from the common run. And very learned."

"Learned, is he?" Shaya stroked his beard with a superb gesture, and listened attentively.

"He has written a book which some German university rewarded him for with a gold medal."

"A big medal?"

"Don't know." She gave a disdainful shrug.

"We shall be wanting a doctor for our hospital. If he is so clever a man, I should be glad to have him."

"Is the salary good?"

"Quite good. But that's of little account. He will have a first-rate practice: to serve in my firm is a valuable asset by itself. Tell him to come to my office to-morrow. A learned man is a deserving object, and I like to assist such."

"Did you tell Stanislas to invite Boroviecki here?"

"Rose, I have told you that he is Bucholc's man, and to Bucholc and whatever is his I wish the worst may happen! May the man himself become a bankrupt, and have to go into service!—On account of that robber, that cursed German who came here in a cart drawn by dogs, and has made all his fortune at our expense (may he and his posterity, even unto the tenth generation, be ruined utterly!)—through him I am always in feeble health, and my heart within me is in grievous pain, because he is continually stealing everything from me.—And that Boroviecki," he went on, vociferating furiously, "is the worst of all the Germans!"

"Why, Boroviecki is a Pole!"

"He a Pole? A fine Pole indeed! One who has printed such

cotton goods that half my wares were sent back to me from Russia as worthless: Bucholc's articles were superior, they said. He a Pole, and do such things—to the destruction of our industry! Why, he makes such patterns, and coloured so, that no countess need be ashamed to wear them; and for whom? For boors, for know-nothing blockheads. Why so? and for what reason?—Ah! how much I have lost through him! I, yes, and all our people as well. Those poor weavers, how much suffering he has caused them! He it was who brought old Fishbin to ruin—and thirty other firms besides. Never name him to me; when I but think of that man, my bowels within me are afflicted sorely. And he is worse than the very worst of Germans. With them one might come to an understanding; but with him? Oh no! he's a gentleman, a man who is a great noble. Pah!" And he spat with disgust and hatred.

"Shall I send your tea upstairs?"

"No, I shall have tea at Stanislas's house, and take Yulka the toys I got for her to-day from Paris."

Rose kissed her father and went out.

Shaya got up, switched off the light (for he was a saving man in every respect), and set to pacing his study quite in the dark. He hated the man Bucholc with all the mighty hate both of a fanatic and of a rival manufacturer whom he could not get the better of in any branch of the trade. No: Bucholc was first, always and everywhere, and that was what he could not forgive. For his, in his own conviction, was the greatest firm in all Lodz; he was standing at the head of the great multitude of Jews who offered him the reverential love and adoration of impecunious men, hypnotized by the millions which increased in his hands with the swiftness of an avalanche.

Forty years ago—oh! how well he recollected those times!—when Bucholc was already almost a millionaire, he, Shaya, had begun his career as a salesman at some petty shop-keeper's in the Old Town. His duties were to attract customers by loud and noisy touting, to carry packages to purchasers' dwellings, and at times to sweep the shop and the

side-walk in front of it. He would spend whole months thus, on the pavement all day; frost-bitten, rain-sodden, or scorched by the sun; jostled by foot-passengers, hungry and almost always in rags, always hoarse with clamorous tout-ing, and lodging at night for a rouble a month in a horrible den in the poorest section of the ghetto.

Suddenly he disappeared from his abode, that had been the side-walk.

After a few years of absence he returned to Lodz, but no one recognized him there. He had brought back a little money, and set about doing business on his own. It made him smile now with self-pity, when he recalled those times—that miserable cart, in which he went peddling goods about the neighbouring villages; that horse, which got its food by the roadside, or along the peasants' cornfields; and the grinding inhuman misery to which he was a prey; for with a capital of fifty roubles (part of which had gone to buy horse and cart) he had to find food for himself and his wife and family.

Then came those first weaving looms that he set up, and the thousand little frauds—cheating on the weight of the raw material dealt out to the weavers who took it home, cheating by the way he measured the woven cloth, cheating his own stomach and the stomachs of his family—till at length he had enough to risk renting a disused factory.

He was the first, as soon as he got on, to send salesmen round to small towns. As to himself, he scarcely either slept or ate, or indeed lived, except to save money and to work. It was he who first in those days sold on credit to such as desired it, and bought goods on credit too; for Bucholz and the other German manufacturers had hitherto done business exclusively on the old cash system. It was he who first introduced shoddy goods into the country, thus lowering the reputation of Lodz textiles, which had been good till then. He, too, was the first to develop and perfect the method of exploiting everybody and everything.

A fire happened to destroy his rented factory. He at once built a new one of his own, with a thousand workmen. At

last, he was on a sure foundation. Luck followed him everywhere. Roubles in tens and hundreds of thousands, nay, in millions, flowed into his strong-boxes—from gentlemen's manors, from peasants' hovels, from little towns almost swallowed up in dirt, from the capitals, from the steppes. Ever in broader streams they came, and Shaya grew and prospered.

Others lost their money, or died, or succumbed to social or national calamities; Shaya stood firm. His old pavilions ever and anon happened to burn down; new and grander ones took their places, and absorbed all: the land, the stuffs, the men's brains, his rivals—turning all these into millions in the hands of Shaya.

Yet Bucholc still was greater, and Shaya could not overcome him. But as he himself grew greater, so also grew in him the craving to vanquish that man Bucholc. Every rouble got by the other was to him a rouble snatched from himself—stolen; and he lived in the chimerical hope that he might one day get the better of everybody in Lodz, and that, like the huge chimney, the biggest one of all, that he now could see looming in the night with its monstrous silhouette overtopping all the rest, he might at last come to reign over Lodz. But Bucholc was first in everything. Throughout the country, public opinion made much of him; his word was as good as ready money, people came to ask him for his advice, the goods he made were thought most of, and even the man himself commanded some respect; while as to Shaya, his swindling compeers themselves despised and hated the man.

He could make nothing of it all, and came to fancy that Bucholc was robbing him not only of money, but of everything he cared to have—and therefore of the glory of reigning over that forest of chimneys—Lodz. And for that he hated him all the more.

Pacing the dark room, he glanced through the window at the factory, and presently at the workmen's dwellings, brilliantly lighted up. And here he stopped abruptly and put on his spectacles. His eyes were on the third floor of the house

just in front, where three windows shone very brightly, and dim outlines of people passed to and fro.

Opening the window, he listened. The vibrant music of a violin playing some sentimental valse, accompanied by the full, deep tones of a moaning violoncello, was followed by a hush. Then the din of many merry voices broke out; and cascades of jovial laughter, with the clinking of plates and glasses, flooded the silent street. They were in high glee there.

Shaya pressed an electric button; the manservant came in.

"Who lives there?" he asked grimly, pointing to the opposite window.

"You shall know at once, sir."

"What, I am ailing, and they shall make merry? Why should they enjoy themselves at all? And how can they get money enough for their fun?" he thought, with a sense of irritation, and eyes glued to those windows.

"House E, third floor, No. 56; occupied by Ernest Ramish, master weaver in the fifth department," the footman glibly informed him.

"Very good. You will go and tell him to stop playing. I cannot sleep, and I do not want any of their merry-making. —Now order the horses to be put to.—Ernest Ramish is getting too much money, it seems, if he can afford to make merry," he reflected, engraving the name in his memory.

CHAPTER VIII



COMING at once. Good-bye till we meet," Boroviecki said, in a very ill humour, speaking through the telephone. Lucy had begged him to meet her at once in Milsch's wood; she had something of the greatest importance to tell him.

"And I must drive over to that wood—and at such a time!—She's out of her mind!" he grumbled.

Ever since six in the morning he had been in the office, without one minute of leisure; in the factory, to hasten the printing of some new patterns; driving over to the central office to see about the irregularities discovered by Bucholc in the principal warehouse; always rushing to and fro, or writing, or giving numberless directions. Ever so many matters were seething in his brain, ever so many workmen awaiting his directions, ever so many machines standing still until he gave orders. He had been at odds with Bucholc. His nerves could no longer stand the strain of waiting several days for a wire from Moritz about the price of cotton. Overburdened by the terrible daily yoke he had to bear, now he had taken up Knoll's duties, and bewildered besides as he was by the greatness and the number of the affairs he had to manage—here he had to go to a rendezvous outside the town with an infatuated woman!

He felt intensely annoyed.

To-day he had not had so much as time for a cup of tea. Bucholc, though unwell, had given orders they should carry him into the office in his arm-chair; and there, meddling with everything, raising his voice at everybody, he had done no more than frighten and confuse the clerks.

"Mr. Boroviecki," said Bucholc, seated, with bandages on

his legs, a shabby fur cap on his head, and his stick across his knees, "just phone to Marks: he's not to let Milner in Warsaw have a rouble's worth more of goods. He had a credit open, but he owes us too much, and I am informed that he intends one of these days to declare himself bankrupt."

Boroviecki phoned, then looked through a long column of figures.

"Mr. Horn," he said, "look through this again. There is some mistake; the railway charges are much too high. Probably they took the wrong number on the tariff." Horn had, for several days—since the Sunday before, to be precise—been transferred, on Bucholc's demand, from the office of the printing and bleaching department to his own personal service.

Horn, extremely pale, with livid lips and eyes reddened by overwork and insomnia, counted mechanically, made blunders, and was completely unable to concentrate; the figures danced before his eyes, as smuts dance in the breeze. He was always yawning and looking at the clock with an expression of intense weariness, and longing that twelve might soon strike.

"That woman, your protégée—let them give her two hundred roubles—to get drunk with! She's not worth fifty—she and her brats thrown in too!"

"Has our law department settled the business then?"

"It has. She must sign an official receipt. Bauer, you! have an eye to this affair, or there'll be somebody else to make her bring an action against us."

Horn bent his head over his work to conceal a smile of mischievous triumph.

"Mr. President," said Charles—"could you let me have your carriage?"

"Certainly, if you want one, and as often as you choose. I'll telephone to the stable instantly.—Kundel! push me away." This to the footman, who pushed the arm-chair to the telephone that was in connexion with the factories. "The stable!" he cried out, ringing violently. "A carriage this instant: send it at once to the office. And any time Mr.

Boroviecki orders it. . . . Who is speaking? Why, I am speaking, Bucholc, you simpleton!" he added in answer to the customary question of the switch-board operator.

On returning, the footman pushed the arm-chair back to his desk, and remained standing by.

"Horn, sit down beside me. I shall dictate to you.—Move more quickly when I tell you to do a thing!" he snarled.

Horn bit his lips in silence, and proceeded to write under Bucholc's dictation, who at the same time went on settling other matters, now and then exclaiming: "Don't fall asleep! I'm not paying you for sleeping!" and he thumped the floor vigorously with his stick.

Horn was so irritated and out of all patience at the time that he could scarce forbear from breaking out there and then. He was almost boiling over.

The telephone bell rang.

"Baron Oscar Meyer asks whether he can come and see Mr. President in half an hour?"

"Tell him, Mr. Boroviecki, I can see no one; I am ill in bed."

Charles phoned, and listened again.

"What does he want now?"

"He says it's personal business, very important."

"I can see no one.—Let Baron Oscar Meyer transact important business with my poodle—not with me! The dog! the lout!" he went on muttering in the intervals of dictation.

He could not bear Meyer, and was the man in Lodz who jeered the loudest at the title of baron, bought in Germany by Meyer, formerly a journeyman weaver in Bucholc's factory, now a manufacturer of woollen stuffs, and worth millions.

"Faster, man, faster!" Bucholc said to Horn with a growl.

"I write with only one hand."

"What does that mean?"

"That I cannot write faster than I do now."

Bucholc went on dictating, but somewhat more slowly; for Horn, as if to anger the man, wrote very deliberately,

frowning more and more heavily in his exasperation.

All was still in the office. Borowiecki, who had donned his overcoat, was at the window impatiently awaiting the carriage. The clerks, with heads all bent over their desks, were working away zealously, afraid to breathe too loud or to exchange a single word with one another, because of the presence of Bucholc. All feared him—all but Bauer alone, his old friend and confidant—the man who, as Borowiecki had inferred, must have secretly communicated that telegram to Zuker.

The carriage came at last; but as Charles was hurrying off, Bucholc called after him: "When you come back again, mind you step in here."

To which Borowiecki gave no answer but an inaudible curse. He was so tired with work, so worn out with racking suspense and waiting for Moritz's telegram, that he felt ready to drop with fatigue.

"Milsch's wood!" was his order to the coachman.

On arriving in front of an old brewery—a great dead, half-ruined house, he told the man to pull up and await his return.

He walked round the house in decay: round those walls with broken windows, the gate and all the doors gone, the roofs fallen in, and even some of the brick walls crumbling into the quaggy loam. He went round several fences in front of the storehouses and, crossing a squashy field of strong clay, in which the mud was over his ankles, at last entered Milsch's wood, as it was called.

"Deuce take that hysterical woman!" he swore, with increasing wrath; for the soft clayey soil stuck to his boots so fast that it was all he could do not to stick fast himself. "That heroine of romance!" he added resentfully, for he keenly felt his ridiculous position—playing the young lover, running through the mud to a trysting-place at the other end of the town—and in March besides!

It was a dull day. The clouds floated low, dissolving little by little into a thin penetrating drizzle. Lodz disappeared under dingy vapours and volumes of smoke, which lay like a

canopy all over the town, and seemed upheld by its thousand chimneys.

Boroviecki halted a little under the shelter of a summer restaurant, at present closed, which was quite near the wood. The place was quiet and sheltered, but Charles could see nothing from there, and so determined to enter the wood itself.

It was a wretched lot of fir-trees, slowly withering away, on account of the neighbouring factories, and also of the wells, which now went deeper and deeper into the soil, thus depriving the trees of their proper moisture. And then, a stream of waste products from the factories, flowing on like a many-coloured ribbon, and sinuously winding among the decaying fir-trees, had spread deleterious emanations all around, and brought death to those mighty trunks.

Slipping in the mud and snow, stumbling against roots and snags, Boroviecki went on and on into the wood, but could find Lucy nowhere.

Provoked by his fruitless search, chilled to the marrow by his dank surroundings, he was on the point of returning to his carriage, when on a sudden, darting from behind a tree where she had been hiding, Lucy threw her arms round his neck with such impetuosity that his hat was knocked off.

"I love you, Charles!" she cried, with a passionate kiss.

He kissed her back indeed, but without a word; he could not trust himself not to swear if he spoke. He put his arm round her, and so they walked about among the trees, over the slippery ground.

The wood was rustling with a dull dreary noise, and the needles of the withering fir-trees blew down upon their heads, along with the rain, that now was pattering louder in the branches.

Lucy was talking and chattering and babbling unweariedly, at times only interrupting her talk with a kiss, as she nestled up close to him caressingly, like a kitten. She prattled on about many things, as a baby would do, passing from one to another; and before she had done one sentence, she was beginning another with a kiss. And the merest trifle

sent her off into a burst of hearty, joyous laughter. And she did look extremely beautiful, in her early spring dress of English make, her black fur pelisse, and that great black hat of hers under which her eyes glittered like sapphires!

She was enraptured to have so romantic a lovers' meeting. A meeting in the town did not appeal to her; she longed for something out of the common, and hankered after the feeling of the uncertain. That was why she had hit on the idea of a woodland meeting, and enjoyed its realization with all the impetuosity of a tired-out soul. So she noticed neither Charles's silence, nor his monosyllabic replies, nor his frequent glances at his watch.

What did anything matter? She was with him. At times he kissed her with such passion that he made a film come over her eyes. And she could tell him of her love, and time and again fling herself into his arms with an overpowering thrill, all the sweeter for the fear of being discovered. From instant to instant she would look round in terror. When the trees murmured louder, or the crows, flapping their wings, flew townwards with a shriek, she would creep very close to him, affrighted and trembling all over, till he dispelled her fears with a kiss and the assurance that all was right.

"Have you a revolver, Charles?" she asked once.

"I have."

"Do let me see it, my sweet, my only one. You see, I shall fear less now. You would not leave me, would you?"

"Of course not. But what do you fear?"

"I do not know, but I am much afraid—very, very much afraid"; and she would glance swiftly round at the wood.

"There are no robbers here, I give you my word."

"None, say you? and I read the other day that a man going home from work was stabbed in this very wood. That people are murdered here I know for certain," and she trembled all over.

"Be easy: no one shall harm you while I am by your side."

"I know you for a very brave man. I love you, Charles; but kiss me—kiss me very, very hard!"

He kissed her.

Suddenly, "Hark!" she said, shrinking back. "Somebody is calling!"

There was nobody. The wood murmured, and the trees were bending and bowing to and fro with slow rhythmical movements, as if to chase away the wisps of mist that were coming in from the country, more rapidly now, but thinner and thinner; for the rain had begun to fall in earnest and beat upon the wood as with showers of corn, and drummed on the iron roof of the restaurant.

Charles opened his umbrella and they went under a tree that gave them a little shelter.

"You will get wet. I am so sorry you are exposed to such weather."

"But I like it so much, Charles."

Taking off a glove, she held out her hand to the rain.

"Now you will catch cold and fall ill."

"I don't mind; I should lie in bed and think of you only and always."

"Ah, but then I should not see you at all."

"I don't want that.—I had not seen you these three days; I could not bear waiting any longer.—Were you too thinking of me?"

"I could not help it, could think of nothing else."

"Ah, how sweet!—Do you love me still, Charles?"

"Can you doubt me?"

"No. I do believe your love will last for ever."

"For ever!"

He was endeavouring to soften his voice and bring a look of joy into his face, but was hardly successful. His galoshes were filled with mud and water, his shoes soaked through and through; and there were such heaps of work awaiting him!

They spent an hour together thus. She would not return till her face and hands were so very cold that he had to warm them with kisses. At parting, he asked whether there had really been any affair of such great importance. She flung her arms round his neck.

"I love you. I wanted to tell you that. I wanted you to know."

At last they parted; but she came back several times to bid him farewell once more, to assure him of her love, and to entreat him not to leave the wood until she had reached her carriage, now awaiting her in a lane, with palings on either side.

The sirens announcing dinner-time were rending the air with their clamour when Charles got into his carriage and went off to the office at a gallop. There he found no one in but Bucholc and Horn. The rest had gone to dinner.

"You stress your words too much when you speak," Bucholc was saying to Horn, raising himself up in his easy-chair.

"I can't speak in any other fashion," Horn answered back.

"Then you must learn; the way you speak is intolerable to me."

"To me, Mr. President, what you say is the reverse of interesting," Horn returned, apparently calm; but his lips twitched convulsively, and his blue eyes seemed to have suddenly turned black.

"To whom are you speaking?"

"To you, Mr. President."

"Mr. Horn, I warn you that I am not a very patient man, and that I——"

"I don't wish to know whether you are or not; it's no concern of mine."

"When I, Bucholc, am speaking, don't you cut in!"

"When I, Horn, am speaking, why should you not hold your tongue? I see no reason."

Bucholc started up, but a sudden twinge made him take in his breath with a gasp. For a while he rubbed his bandaged legs, breathing heavily, and shaking with passion, yet silent and striving for self-control.

Horn, who with malice prepense, nay, quite methodically, had been working Bucholc into a rage, laid down his ledgers, took up his pencils, india-rubber, and other belongings,

wrapped them up in paper, and put them quietly into his pocket. All this he did with much deliberation, eyeing Boroviecki the while. The latter, astounded at such behaviour and at so bewildering an altercation, had no idea what to do. To side with Horn was impossible, first because he did not know what the row was all about; and then because the friendship of Bucholc meant more to him than Horn's. So he stared as though shocked at Horn, who was quietly putting on his galoshes, and smiling, though with livid lips.

At last Bucholc hissed: "You are no longer in my service. I discharge you!"

"I don't care a damn for you or your service."

And he put on the other galosh.

"Kundel!" Bucholc said, addressing Augustus almost in a whisper, and grasping his stick firmly, "out of doors with him!"

"Pray, Augustus, let me be, and don't begin, or I'll break both your ribs and your master's."

"Curse the fellow!" Bucholc shrieked. "Turn him out!"

"You shut up!" Horn shouted, catching up a heavy chair, ready to use it as a weapon on anyone who touched him. Then he sent it crashing under the desk and strode out, slamming the glazed door with such violence that all the panes went flying.

Boroviecki had slipped out before the explosion. Bucholc, almost beside himself with fury, fell back in his chair and groaned. He had but strength enough to press an electric button and call for the police in a husky, strangled voice. The footman stood there, terrified and bewildered, gazing at Bucholc's livid face, and his mouth, distorted with agony.

At last the old man came to himself, looked round the empty office, settled himself in the arm-chair, and, after a considerable pause, called in a gentle voice: "Augustus!"

Augustus approached, but in great fear: his master never spoke so gently, nor called him by his name, but when he was at his very worst.

"Mr. Horn: where is he?"

"Master turned him out, and he is gone."

"And where is Mr. Borowiecki?"

"He only just looked in and went out again. He had to go to dinner, for it is past twelve, and the sirens sounded for noon some time ago." The poor fellow was lengthening out his explanation on purpose to put off a little the trouble that was coming.

"Good. Come and stand here by me."

He was shaking all over, but obeyed.

"I am listening, master," he said in a subdued, humble voice.

"I ordered you to drive that dog out; why did you not?"

"But, master, he went by himself," he tried to explain, shedding tears.

"Silence!"

Augustus shrank away instinctively.

"Stand here! Nearer!"

And as the man, overwhelmed with fear, but obedient, edged closer, his master, catching him by the arm, set to cudgelling him with might and main. Augustus did not so much as attempt wriggling out of his grasp; he only averted his face to hide the tears that streamed down his clean-shaven cheeks. And when Bucholc, half-dead with exhaustion, left off thrashing the man, and lay groaning in his chair, Augustus proceeded to wrap his master's legs again in the flannel bandages that had slipped off during his tempest of rage.

Charles had in the mean time withdrawn to get his dinner, not being desirous of witnessing a scene.

The place where he dined was in Spacerova Street, and was called the Colony. It had been opened by about fifteen women, whom their destiny had driven from various parts of the country to the streets of Lodz. Most of them had been wrecked by the storms of life: widows, ex-landowners, ex-capitalists, ex-ladies, old maids and youthful maidens, who had come to get work here. They were united by their common misery, which had abolished from amongst them all differences of class and caste.

They had rented a whole flat in Spacerova Street, and ar-

ranged it as a sort of hotel. A passage ran the length of the flat to a large chamber at one end, which served as the dining-room for all. Charles, Moritz, and several other acquaintances took dinner there regularly.

He had come somewhat late; the large round dinner-table was almost full. All were eating quickly and in silence. There was no time for talk. They all lent an attentive ear, often with heads raised, expecting the signal for work to recommence.

Charles took a seat near the lady who had presided in the box at the play on Saturday night, shook hands right and left, nodded to those farther off, and set to without a word.

"Has Horn not come in yet?" somebody asked Mrs. Lapinska across the table.

"He is rather late to-day," she replied.

"He is not coming till this evening," was the information volunteered by a very young girl with short hair, which she from time to time tossed back.

"What's the reason, Kama?" they asked.

"He was to have a row with Bucholc to-day, and leave his service."

"Did he tell you that?" Boroviecki eagerly inquired.

"He had planned to do it."

"As I see, he never does anything he has not planned. He is method's very self."

"I saw him once, quarrelling with Müller at our office."

"And I," Charles put in, "just now left him quarrelling with Bucholc."

"What—what was it took place, Mr. Charles?" Kama cried, and ran round to him, putting her tiny childlike hand on his head, and caressingly entreating him to speak.

"Charles, do pray tell us all about it," she begged.

Several heads were raised to listen.

"Nothing really had taken place when I left, and I don't know what occurred after. They were at daggers drawn, and Horn was very offensive—quite insulting, in fact."

"Ha ha! Hurrah for Horn—a brave fellow!"

"Not so much bravery as a common thoughtless love

of squabbling," Charles said, in marked disagreement.

The women all looked at Kama, who had shrunk away from Boroviecki, and who, flushed and indignant, was eyeing him angrily. "You must not speak of Horn like that!"

"I will not withdraw, but I'll prove what I have said. If the man wanted to leave, and had any grievance against Bucholc, he might very well have laid it before him, and spoken out freely; for Bucholc is intelligent, and easier to get on with than the others. What was the use, then, of such a scene? Merely to show off, and make folks in Lodz talk about him.—A very valiant deed it was, too, was it not? to go insulting a sick man!—And mind: Bucholc, until he dies, will never forgive him that; he will make him pay for it; he has a good memory."

"Until he dies!" Kama cried out excitedly. "That won't be long, thank God! I hear he's extremely ill."

"Kama, how can you speak so?"

"Besides," Kama went on, "Horn does not care a fig. He'll go back to Warsaw, his home, where he may defy Bucholc."

"Bucholc has a long arm, that he can stretch out even to Warsaw. He may find how to—interest—certain people in Horn's doings. Yes, Horn may find himself in a very cold place indeed, and for long enough to cool down thoroughly."

Somewhere not far away a siren uttered its shrill blast.

One after the other the men got up from table, leaving their meal unfinished, and with a quick bow (having no time for leave-taking) they rushed away, putting on their overcoats while going downstairs, and made for their several factories. The roar of the sirens was heard over all the town, like the booming of a cannonade, calling everybody to work. Each man knew the note of his own siren; at that hateful sound everyone left what he was about and ran to be in time.

The only man who, besides Boroviecki, could disregard the signal was Malinowski, a young technician in Shaya's office. He was very taciturn during the meal, which he interrupted only to jot down some notes in a book lying by his plate.

Occasionally he darted a glance in the direction of Mrs. Stephanie. Then he would utter a low sigh, arrange his hair, make bread pellets, and sit with his eyes fixed upon them. His face was pale as raw percale; his hair and moustache were ashen-hued, and his odd green eyes never quite of the same shade. He attracted universal attention, not only for being a strikingly handsome man, but for being remarkably shy and reserved.

"Auntie! has Mr. Malinovski said anything to-day?" Kama demanded. She felt a special pleasure in teasing him daily. Mrs. Lapinska, who was engaged in conversation with Boroviecki, made no reply. Malinovski smiled a curiously sympathetic smile and again took some notes in his book.

One by one the women at table got up and withdrew, for every one was engaged in some industry or business.

In the antechamber the bell was heard to ring violently.

"It is my man Matthew, with a telegram!" Charles exclaimed at the sound, for he knew very well what Matthew's ring was like.

The man entered at once with a telegram from Moritz.

"It has only just come in, and here we are!" he reported.

"When we have muddy boots, we should always wipe them in the hall before we come in," Kama said, snubbing Matthew severely.

Boroviecki, indifferent to the glances of curiosity that followed him, took the telegram to the window, and read:

"Good.—Knoll, Zuker, Mendelsohn, buying.—Sent off first consignment this morning.—Store it with me.—Fifteen per cent dearer.—Supplies scanty.—Back in a week."

Charles read the message through with devouring interest; his satisfaction was visible.

"Good news, Mr. Charles?" Mrs. Stephanie inquired, raising her pale blue eyes to his beaming face.

"Very good."

"From your fiancée?" Kama chirped.

"A nice fiancée! From Moritz in Hamburg."

He rose to take leave.

"But why? You have not to answer the call of the siren."

"All the same, I never was so busy as now."

"Very true. For us you have no time at all. These last three Sundays you have not been once with us in the evening," said Stephanie, the lady with the pale blue eyes, with a touch of reproach in her voice.

"Mrs. Stephanie, I cannot bring myself to believe my absence has been noticed; I am not so conceited as that. And I am quite sure that, when I missed those delightful evenings, I lost far more than you did."

"That's as it may be," she replied in a low voice, giving him her hand, which he kissed with great fervour as he went away.

Kama stopped him in the hall. "Mr. Charles, I have a request to make, and a very great one."

"Please tell it to me; it is already granted, I give you my word. Speak, little one."

Kama kept her eyes away from him; the ringlets of her short curly hair came down over her forehead, and she did not toss them back. She stood against the entrance door, with clenched hands, trying for some time to muster up courage.

"Do not be so much against Horn; give him help. He is so good, so noble—and so unhappy here in Lodz! So unhappy! Everybody is against him, everybody makes fun of him—and I will not have it so. It pains me very much.—I should be so delighted if—— And I will not have things as they are," she concluded, and, weeping bitterly, fled into the parlour, losing one of her slippers on the way there.

"That little one is in love," he thought, and stopped short for an instant. Then he picked up the slipper, followed the girl to the parlour, opened the door, and stood dumbfounded with astonishment.

Both her slippers were off, and she was running round the table in pursuit of a tiny little Italian dog which had got the other slipper in its mouth and had made off with it.

She laughed almost to split her sides as she ran to catch the dog. He was too cunning for her, always managing to dodge her and escape at the last moment; and when the

pursuit grew slack, he would drop the slipper and bark.

"Piccolo, give it up—give it to Kama! Be obedient, Piccolo!" she would say, coaxing him. But as she came nearer and crept closer, the cunning dog was too quick for her; he snatched the slipper up and ran off again.

"Well," Boroviecki remarked, "I shall give you back the slipper I have found, though I might have kept it."

"Aunt! Aunt!" she cried out in consternation, and flopped down in the middle of the room, to hide her stockinged feet.

He left the slipper on the floor and went out; she had really been very funny.

He first went over to Moritz's office, to see in which warehouse the cotton was to be stored. On his way back, he met Kozlovski, the acquaintance he had made at Murray's.

"Good-day, Director," said he, extending a hand that wore a then fashionable red glove.

"Good-day."

"I'll go with you a little way."

As he spoke, he tilted his silk hat a little back with the knob of his stick.

"Certainly; I shall be much pleased.—How is business getting on?"

"Splendidly, I tell you. I have a grand idea, and only want money to bring it out.—Ah! that's a turnip, not a girl!" he cried, looking round at a woman, and fixed his hat firmly on his forehead with much self-satisfaction.

"What! are you going to do business in that line?"

"Quite impossible here in Lodz. Why, it was yesterday that I for the first time saw a pretty woman. She therefore cannot be of the town, of course."

"Still, there are pretty women in Lodz."

"Give you my word, don't agree with you. I am always in town, always looking about me; for without women—and fine ones too—life is not worth living."

"Well, and the one of yesterday?" Charles said, drawing him out; the young spark was beginning to entertain him.

"Aha! you shall know. Well, I was going down Piotrowska Street, on my way from the Grand Hotel. I look, and there

comes, straight down upon me, a woman. Her costume—very *chic*; her lips—dainty; her figure—magnificent; her hair—pitch-black; her eyes—like smoky sapphires; her hips—a four-square rampart; her stature—willowy. And there you are! Not a woman, a goddess! And her mouth—I tell you, Director, is like the most delicious cutlet!”

“Haven’t you had your dinner yet?” Charles interrupted.

“Why do you ask?” the other demanded curtly, pushing his silk hat to the back of his head.

“Because your simile smells very much of the kitchen.”

“Ah! Director, I see you are a merry fellow,” Kozlovski cried, with a friendly tap on the stomach.

“Well, then, I turn round on the spot and follow her. She walks on and on; I after her. Beyond the New Market-place—down there—there was mud on the side-walk. So my little lady puts her sunshade under her arm, holding up her dress with both hands; and on she goes! It was a splendid sight. Legs quite divine; and her feet! I could have kissed them. I look round at her on every side; and on she goes still, making out she does not see me.—I went on in front of her, stopped outside a shop, and when she came up, looked into her eyes. Such a ravishing smile!—she exhaled fragrance—her eyes burnt me up to a cinder.—On we go; she first—I close behind. Who can she be? Her manner—rather suspicious; shows off too much that she is taking no notice of me.—Now, I’ve a sure and certain system to judge women by; so I began to look her over more accurately. She seemed very elegant, but I saw her hair was untidy. One point against her! Her dress was costly: best woollen cloth, well made and right for the season; a point in her favour. Her hat, certainly from Paris; another good point. But, looking more carefully, what do I see just above her boots? Stockings of quite vulgar reddish-brown Scotch worsted—*fil d’Écosse*! I was intrigued; they ought to have been of silk. Another bad point.”

“Were you ever engaged in a ladies’ department?” Charles asked, somewhat slightly.

“Never. But in these matters I am an expert. I, my dear

sir, can at once, and from a mere inspection of wardrobe and toilet details, tell who she is, where from, and how much she has."

"Then who was she, that beauty of yours?"

Charles took care not to let Kozlovski know that, from the description given, he had recognized Mrs. Zuker.

"You see, I'm not sure; it's the first time my method has been at fault. Her hat, her face, bespoke a woman of good society, a millionaire; her dress, a well-to-do person—a woman with a carriage; but the *fil d'Écosse* stockings told of a schoolmistress, or a petty tradesman's wife, or an official's. And her under petticoat—for I caught a glimpse of it—was of cheap yellow silk stuff! Even that's nothing; but it was trimmed with—*cotton lace*!" He spoke the last two words almost in a tone of horror. "Think of it, Director: cotton lace!"

"Well, but what does this indicate?"

"That she's shoddy—a mere streetwalker, or, at best, a servantwoman well dressed up.—That finished me. I had no more use for her. I glanced at her for the last time. Something must have offended her, for she let her dress down—in the mud!—And walked across the street!"

"And did you follow her any farther?"

"No. She was not worth while. Had my previous estimate been at fault, when she let down her dress and dragged it through the mire, that sufficed to convince me she was nothing but a common Lodzian wench. Not even a Warsaw seamstress would have done anything of the sort. They have nice ankles, and like them to be seen. And then, to bedraggle her dress—fie, for shame!"

He made a disdainful grimace, and came to a standstill.

"To our next meeting; I must go in here," said Charles, and to get rid of him entered the confectioner's shop at the corner of Meyer's Passage.

Once there, the idea suddenly came to him of giving a treat to the Colony. He purchased a large tray full of cakes, and a box of dainty sweets, which he dispatched to Kama with the accompanying note.

"Little one, cry no more. Share these sweets with Piccolo, who must not be so naughty, nor steal your slippers next time. And be sure that Charles, bad boy though he is, will do all he can on behalf of H——."

He ordered the whole to be forwarded to Spacerova Street.

"Let them profit a little by my good fortune!"

So satisfied was he with himself and the world that he bowed right and left to all his many acquaintances, hurrying away from dinner to factories and offices; and it was with a feeling of compassion that he caught sight of Kozlovski, following women on the other side of the street, and every now and then peeping into their faces. The fellow looked so ridiculous, with his overcoat shaped just like a common sack; and his light-coloured trousers, pretentiously turned up to an outrageous extent above his patent-leather boots; and that cylindrical hat of his, quite on the back of his head; and that face, like a pug-dog's, but with an ever-varying expression!

The side-walks were thronged with working-people, hastening to their factories at the call of the detested siren resounding through the air; some of them were sprinting on and finishing their dinner at the same time. The clatter of wooden soles filled the street with a noise that ceased only when the great wave of grimy, dingy, tattered, and wretched-looking workers had rolled away down side streets and through gateways.

A funeral train was passing down one side of the thoroughfare. A tiny coffin of plain deal, marked with a blue cross, was borne by four striplings, clad in black, following the sexton—a hunchbacked man, dressed in a blue cape, over which towered his bald and withered head, as he went on, bearing a crucifix—and plodded, splashing drowsily, through the deep mud. Behind the coffin, but close to the side-walk, came several children with umbrellas. The cabs and carriages and huge trucks laden with wares had driven them from the middle of the street and bespattered the tiny coffin with thick black mud, that an old woman wiped off at intervals with her apron.

No one had any time to notice the funeral train. Only a workman here and there doffed his cap, or a woman crossed herself and breathed a prayer—and went on their way, driven onward by the sound of the sirens, which like sharp-edged blades, ripped the air—that grey, ponderous air, saturated with smoke-wreaths, pouring in foul streaks from numberless chimneys, and floating down to the roofs and into the streets, with odours that were hard to bear.

Boroviecki was looking about him for a cab, the sooner to arrive at his factory, when he heard himself saluted from a passing carriage. It was Mada Müller, together with her brother, who, in a red *Burschen* cap, and his green and red corporation scarf on his breast, sat lolling back in the carriage, with a large black poodle on his lap.

"And what about the books? The titles, you know—that you promised me," were her first words on meeting.

Her eyes, with those golden lashes, looked into Boroviecki's.

"I must frankly confess they have slipped my memory. But I'll make amends, and promise solemnly you shall have them this very day."

"You're not reliable; I must have a better guarantee," she chirruped gaily.

"I'll give you my signature."

"Won't do! A signature costs but little." She laughed outright, amused by the mock solemnity—hand on heart—with which he had promised.

"Then I'll get some big firm to back me."

"Would Mrs. Likiert do?" she blurted out, and immediately hid her face in her muff, dismayed at having uttered words she never meant to have said.

"I told her lots of times that she was a goose, and she would never believe me," Wilhelm growled.

"Which way are you going?" she said, anxious to undo the mischief she had done, and raising her face, now beetroot-coloured.

"Why, to my duties," he answered without embarrassment,

though the mention of Mrs. Likiert's name had touched him to the quick.

"Shall we take Mr. Borowiecki there with us?"

"All right, Mada."

"I should be very glad—if you wish," she said to Charles.

"My answer is to get in."

"Wilhelm," she cried, asserting herself, "you make room for Mr. Borowiecki! Sit in front with your dog."

"No, thanks," said Charles; "I prefer a low seat, and shall be more at ease.—A very fine dog!"

"Cost three thousand marks. Got a medal at the Dog Show."

"Then it must be quite a paragon."

"A nasty dog! Barks at me, and has quite torn my new apron."

"And did you not punish it for a crime of the sort?"

"Wilhelm would not let me beat it."

"And where are you two going together?"

"Mada wants to look in at the Artists' Hall; of course she'll buy some stupid little picture.—I wanted Cæsar to get a little fresh air. He and I are both too much cooped up at home!"

"When are you returning to Berlin?"

Here Mada fell a-laughing loud and heartily. "He has been going off this whole month, and quarrelling every day about it with Papa."

"Mada, you silly girl! be quiet and do not talk about matters you can't understand," he began, so angrily that the scar on his face glowed crimson. Then he straightened out his big limbs and sat up, very much out of sorts.

"Pray, Mr. Charles, do you too think me a silly girl? Everybody at home says I'm that, and I shall end by believing it myself. And yet I know a thing or two.—For instance, Wilhelm has been making debts in Berlin, and Papa won't pay them! And that's why he stays on here."

"Mada, I shall get down and tell Father this instant what you have chattered about!"

"Do by all means; Mr. Charles and I shall be more comfortable without you.—But you have not answered my question, Mr. Charles."

"Because there can be no answer to such a question as that."

"You won't tell me the truth."

"In this case, because I do not know it."

"When shall I get the titles?"

"This very day."

"Don't believe you. I'd rather you brought them yourself as a punishment."

"If *that's* a punishment, then how splendid will my reward be, when I get it!"

"You shall have a first-rate coffee," she answered, with great *naïveté*.

Wilhelm burst into a loud guffaw, and Cæsar barked in chorus.

"What silly thing have I been saying?" she asked, her face quite scarlet.

"Mr. Wilhelm is laughing at the dog.—See how droll it looks!"

"You are a good kind man; so Papa says, and so does everybody at home but Wilhelm."

"Mada!"

"I am so comfortable here that it's a pity to get down, but here's my factory.—Many thanks; see you later."

"We shall be expecting you Sunday afternoon."

"I remember. A pity to-morrow is not Sunday!"

Mada laughed merrily, and bent a very friendly look on him.

For some time he stood still and observed her looking back at him. "Why is not my Anne a millionaire?—Can't be helped," he thought, entering the factory, which, after the midday recess, had quite resumed its customary state of frantic activity.

From one of the side buildings, there came a platoon of the volunteer fire-brigade. Carts, fire-engines, and water-barrels were all rushing on with great speed and the utmost

order, and under the wheels and the horses' hoofs the mud—even in the solid macadam beneath—lay open in long, deep grooves. Workers who had volunteered as firemen were riding along on the carts, busily putting on their uniforms.

"Where is the fire, Mr. Richter?" Charles inquired of the head officer, one of the foremen in the cotton mills, whom the factory porter was accoutring in his lodge, and trying to dress and gird up.

"Albert Grosman's place is on fire.—Squeeze a bit more!" he cried out to the janitor, unable to get his portly belly within the bounds of the officer's uniform. It was rather too tight, and several buttons had flown off in the process.

"How long on fire?"

"Half an hour, but in all likelihood it will burn down.—Tighter, Mr. Shmit."

"Why in such a hurry then?"

"Groslik phoned to our old man, imploring him not to let Grosman's place be burnt down; of course because he has a spite against him."

"But why?—Ah, I see: he would have the man ruined."

"The third fire to-day!"

"All of them factories?"

"All."

"Yes; making up for what they lost by the late failures."

"Blast them all, those jail-birds, those sons of dogs! They make mints of money out of this, and we have to rush from fire to fire, with tongues lolling out of our throats, like tired dogs!"

"What's to be done? Without a fire they could never strike a balance."

"Good afternoon—ugh! I shall burst," he said, as he waddled out to the cab in waiting outside the factory gate, and at once drove off at a gallop after his brigade, which had set out before and could now be seen at the end of the street, with their brazen helmets, bright as samovars.

"Oho! the season promises to be hot—*burning* hot!" Charles mused, as he went to the telephone to acquaint Max Baum with the contents of the telegram.

Before he had got there, another telephone message interfered with him. It was Travinski, who desired to confer with Charles on important business.

"I shall be expecting you in the printing department," he answered, and plunged at once into the whirlpool of the factory.

Where he went, there was an endless line of machines in motion, of trucks piled with many-coloured goods and moving each in another direction. And in this forest of belts and wheels and bands and men; in this tumult of vapours, inferno-like, which rose in clouds above the washing-machines; in this chaos of mingled buzzings, quivering trills, and shrieks and clanking noises, and of frantic, palpitating energy which carried everything and everybody away with it, and seemed almost to move the firm walls with its intense force, exerted to the very utmost: here Charles dived deep down into the wild impetuous life of the factory. He made the round of all departments, examined the stuffs produced, issued his orders, and was off again to another place, giving up to entire oblivion whatsoever was not in connexion with the factory.

After the state of nervous excitement he had gone through, he now experienced a sense of relief, and let himself be carried on with delight in the torrent of tremendous forces accumulated around him. His tired feeling had passed away, and he felt calm and serene in these infernal regions of the factory, as if he had inhaled the countless streams of energy continually pouring forth from both men and machines, and surging in upon every side.

Having inspected all the departments, he returned to the "Kitchen." Murray was in his little den, separated from the rest of the place by a glazed partition, and making tests with a tiny printing-machine. One had just been a failure: the colours had spread over the stuff and blurred the pattern. He was in a fury; smiling blandly indeed, but his face was grey with disappointment, and he bared his long, yellow teeth, like a bulldog's. Wiping his hands on the apron he was accoutred with, he cursed under his breath.

"Here I have been slaving since noon, and I positively cannot get a fast dye!"

Boroviecki set to work with a will to help him, but was interrupted by the appearance of Travinski, in such a pitiable state that he did not so much as remember the usual salutations. From the very threshold he asked for a minute of private conversation.

"Let's go to the roller warehouse; no one is in there."

Charles went first, leading the way.

Travinski had the air of a man in a dream. His blue eyes were wandering about; his clear-cut, noble-looking features were stamped with care and had stiffened into an expression of bitterness, visible in his sunken eyes and the corners of his mouth, which his short moustache failed to conceal. He was an old friend and college companion of Charles, and at the time the owner of a rather large cotton mill.

"Well, are you going to say anything?" Charles asked, as the two entered a large high-ceilinged hall, provided with tiers of iron shelves, glittering with multitudes of brazen printing rollers, like great rolls of papyrus, and covered, as if with hieroglyphs, with patterns in relief that served to print the goods.

"I shall speak presently," he said, sitting down upon a bale. He took off his hat, propped his head against the wall, and sat awhile in silence, gathering strength to speak.

"Are you ill? You do look poorly."

"How can a bankrupt look otherwise?" Travinski replied in a hard voice.

"What's the matter? Have you been cheated again?"

"Worse than that: down, and without any prospect of getting up again."

"What do you mean?" Charles said, feigning surprise; he had already heard that Travinski was shaky.

"That crash which has ruined stronger firms, and caused the fire at Grosman's works, has not spared me either. There are bills of exchange I have to meet on Saturday. To meet them I have nothing but bills issued by firms just gone bankrupt. That is, I have nothing. Yes: to be met on Satur-

day—and I cannot meet them! So I am done for. Mine is damnable luck indeed—it's the third time I have been down—on the very brink of ruin; and I feel that if I go down this time, it is all over with me: that I shall not rise again."

"What are your liabilities?"

"Fifteen thousand."

"What, fail for so small a sum?"

"Small indeed, but I have not got it. I have tried to borrow, but could not. No one in Lodz has any ready money just now; the panic is such that yesterday Grosplik refused to lend twenty thousand—and to Rozenberg! That speaks for itself. No private person, scarcely any bank, is willing to discount the bills even of the strongest firms. Everyone is afraid, for there's an earthquake in Lodz, and every now and then a house totters and falls—and there's no knowing what may happen. Besides, the stagnation is dreadful this season. I have yarn worth ten thousand, ready for sale in my warehouse; no one even makes an offer. The regular purchasers have diminished their output by fifty per cent; and I have to work on, paying my men, and get my living and drive my business; if it stands still one instant, I am lost! And on the top of this wretched state of things these late failures have come—to finish me off! Hard times indeed! Not for the security of the factory with all its plant and wares, and my personal honour and integrity thrown in, can I get anyone to lend me fifteen thousand!"

"Have you tried Bucholc? He assisted Wolkman yesterday."

"Yes, out of hate for Shaya. Besides, I can't ask that damn German for help. It would be loathsome, grovelling."

"What would that signify? His assistance is sure to save you."

"No. He knows my opinion of him."

"But my good word would be of weight with Bucholc."

"Thanks, but I cannot accept it. It would not only be contrary to my principles; it would be a dirty trick for me to beg the help of a man whom I abhor, and am willing to tell so to his face."

Charles lost patience. "A nobleman's logic," he observed, and lit a cigarette.

"I admit," said the other, "only one sort of logic: not a nobleman's, but that of any honest man."

"But recollect: you are in Lodz. As I see, you perpetually forget that you have the delusion of doing business with civilized people of central Europe. Whereas Lodz is a forest, a jungle—in which, if you have good strong claws, you may fearlessly go forward and make away with your neighbours; else they will fall upon you, suck you dry, and toss your carcass away afterwards."

Travinski sat silent. His head was propped up against a large printing roller. His eyes were following the steps of Charles, who, in the excitement of his outburst, paced swiftly up and down the narrow passage separating one tier of shelves from another.

On every side, the factory was in motion, and its dull roar audible like the everlasting murmur of the sea. The walls vibrated; the belts and bands which passed across the room at the ceiling, transmitting power to the adjoining chambers, were humming and buzzing, while the still harsher discordancy of the turning-lathes in the next room upset Travinski's shattered nerves still more.

"What will you do?" Boroviecki said at last, breaking silence.

"I have come to ask you for a loan. I know you have the money. But believe me, if my necessity were not so extreme, I should never have ventured to ask."

"I cannot. I am utterly unable. True, I have money, but you must have heard that I am starting a factory; and besides that, I have other irons in the fire—and they do not leave me free to dispose of any money at all."

"Look here: a bill at one month's date only—on the security of my factory and everything I possess. This would, at the very worst, suffice to cover the sum lent."

"I believe it would, but I am not going to lend it. The fact is, you have no luck, and I should simply be afraid to do business with you. You may hold out, or you may not—who

knows? But I have got to live—and to start my factory. Possibly I might keep you afloat for a year or so, and go down with you in the end.”

“You are frank at any rate,” was the reply, in a derisive whisper.

“My dear fellow, why should I lie to you? I cannot bear a foolish lie, any more than I can bear that sentimental sympathy for every misfortune which only helps the sufferer to die at ease, with tears of pity shed over him. I would help you if I could; as I can’t, I don’t. Surely I am not to give up my overcoat, even to a naked man, if I should die of cold without it.”

“You’re right; no more need be said. Excuse me for troubling you.”

“Do you feel hurt?” Charles said, struck by Travinski’s tone.

“No. You have put the question so clearly that I quite understand your refusal; it may have pained me, but I understand it perfectly.”

He rose to go out.

“Will you not settle with your creditors?”

“No. That is, no ‘playta,’ but an honest bankruptcy.”

“There might be another way out.”

“Tell it to me. I shall be delighted.”

“Are you heavily insured?”

“Sufficiently. I insured in autumn, after the attempted arson.”

“A pity you succeeded in preventing it. By revenging himself that workman of yours would have done you a great service.”

“Are you speaking seriously?”

“Very much so. As much as in pointing out to you that Grosman’s works are on fire, and that we shall certainly find to-morrow that Felix Fishbin, Richter, Fuchs, and others, have done the same. What do you say to that?”

“That I am not and will not be an incendiary and a swindler.”

“But I am not advising you to do as they do. I simply

show you how your rivals manage to keep their heads above water. You can never hold your own against them."

"Ha! Then I'm lost. When I can fight no more, I'll blow my brains out."

"What of your wife?" Charles asked hastily, for he saw in Travinski's eyes the steely glint of desperation.

Travinski shuddered.

"Now, I have an idea. Do you know old Mr. Baum?"

"We are neighbours, and on very friendly terms."

"Go to him; tell him all openly. He's such a queer sort of manufacturer that he is sure to help you. My life on it, since he knows you for the man you are, he will help."

"Really the idea is good; and I shall be none the worse for his refusal."

"Surely not, and the trial is worth making. He is unique among the mill-owners of Lodz. He might have been a millionaire many times over, but never would stoop to pick the millions up. He has paid hundreds of thousands for others, he hates big industrials, is a hidebound man of routine, a nondescript, a freak of nature, as they call him; in reality, only a lunatic, and a survival from the bygone days of hand-spinners and weavers."

They parted in silence. Charles noticed his coldness in taking farewell; and, watching him from the window as he went, he felt an odd twinge of pity for the man. "A whimpering relic of our old nobility!" he thought aloud or nearly so, in order to drive from his soul a faint sense of remorse that had sprung up and was growing apace. He would give Travinski no assistance, and felt his decision to be completely justified; he nevertheless was not pleased at having refused. He had continually before his eyes the sight of that blond head, so noble of aspect, yet stamped and branded, as it were, with the marks of unceasing care and trouble. He felt that he ought to have assisted him; that he would have lost nothing and done a great service. And the gnawing pain within him increased as time went by.

"What does it matter to me, if one more man goes to the devil?" he said to himself, as he made his way to the cloth-

shearing-chamber. The place was crammed up to the ceiling with white cotton goods, which were being conveyed to these machines and thrust between two sharp blades, one running in a spiral round about a cylinder, the other quite straight and flat; and by them both sides of the material pulled forward were shorn with mathematical accuracy, down to the tissue itself, of all the cotton fluff and down that had remained after the weaving process.

In this chamber, white, cool, almost silent, about fifteen women were at work. The air was filled with an impalpable cotton dust, produced by the shearing operation, which hung about the room, sifting its white down over machines and workers and trembling in thick flocculent masses around the transmission belts that turned the shearing-machines and disappeared at the ceiling.

Boroviecki merely looked round, and was about to enter the elevator on his way to the ground-floor, when a terrible human cry was heard for an instant.

One of the driving-wheels had caught hold of the blouse of a workman who had incautiously come too near, whirled him aloft, flung him upon the machine, spun him round and round, crumpled him up, broken him on the machine, crushed him, smashed him, and thrown the shattered mass aside, never stopping in its course for one moment. His blood spurted up to the ceiling, flooded the machine, some of the goods it was shearing, and the working-women who stood by. An immense outcry followed; the machine was stopped, but all was over now. A bleeding bulk hung on the axle of the driving-wheel; other pieces had fallen heavily on the floor from various parts of the machine; they still were quivering with the tremors of the life that had been there. The man was literally torn to pieces; it was absurd to think of doing anything. He lay like a great lump of flesh—a bloody stain on the white ground of raw percale stuff.

Women wailed low; some of the older workmen knelt down by the side of the remains, and began to say aloud the Litany for the dying; the workmen took off their caps; some

made the sign of the cross; all gathered round the dead man. There was no anger in their eyes, only the numbness of stunned apathy. The chamber was hushed, except for the weeping of the women, and the dull murmur of the neighbouring rooms, where everybody was working as usual.

As soon as the factory surgeon on duty came in, Boroviecki withdrew. The foreman of the department also came hurrying in. He, seeing the workers idle and crowding round the remains, cried out from the doorway: "Back to the machines!"

And they all dispersed, like birds at the swoop of a hawk. Presently the machines were all working again—all except that one, blood-stained with the crime it had committed; but workmen at once began to cleanse it.

"Confound it! So much good stuff spoiled!" the foreman cursed at the sight of the percale goods, spotted with gore. And he rated the workmen for their carelessness, and threatened to make the whole chamber pay for the loss.

This Boroviecki did not hear. The elevator had taken him down, quick as lightning, into the dyeing department. The accident had made no impression upon him, accustomed as he was to that sort of thing.

He called Soha, his intended's protégé, who had that day begun his work in the factory, wheeling stuffs about from place to place.

"How are you getting on?"

"Hard at work, sir."

"Well, go on so; but be careful with the machines."

"Ay, those beastly things!" he began, and was about to order his wife to describe how those "beastly things" had that very day torn off a piece of his capote. But his wife was not there, and Boroviecki had passed on, being called away by Bucholc to his office. So he glared sullenly at the transformation wrought in his capote by the machines, scratched his head, and spat in his hands, to push his truck on to the elevator; everybody was crying out at him for blocking the way.

CHAPTER IX



RAVINSKI went away, much depressed. On his way to Charles, he had been so sure his request would be granted! Like all people in dire straits, he had taken his wish for the reality, and a thing that was to be.

He took a cab and went off straight down Piotrovskia Street. He could not think at all; he was broken—unfit for anything, for any movement. So he gave himself up passively to the acrid and all-pervading wave of bitterness that surged within him.

He looked around him—on the dingy town, wet with rain, muddy on the side-walks, swarming with humanity; on the uncountable chimneys, rising straight as poplars above the flat roofs, and vanishing in the lowering gloom, to make their existence known only by clouds of white vapour, hovering over the houses; on the coal-wagons in their hundreds, forming an immense chain of which one extremity was entering some factory or other; on the multifarious conveyances rushing in every direction; at the multitudinous offices and warehouses, those full of people, these piled with goods; and on the strain and stress of life that seethed around him. On all these things he gazed, in something like despair. He felt his own powerlessness: felt that in no long time to come he should drop out of that enormous whirlpool—out of the huge machine called Lodz—like a bit of used-up matter which the monster needed no more.

With impotent aversion he eyed the works with their thousand casements bright in the murky gloaming, and the grand thoroughfare, which—like a great canal—shut in by the smoke and the grey of the dusky sky, poured forth luminous torrents and throbbed with the full strength of life. His eyes

slurred over the sharp outlines of the factory buildings; the electric suns shining outside their courtyards dazzled and hurt them; he was sick of the dull murmur, mighty because never ceasing, that floated into the street from all the mills and workshops; irritated by all that powerful palpitating life; irritated, too, by that terrible consciousness of the dying man whose last glance tells him so many are living still. And in that consciousness his heart was gnawed with envy unutterable.

He could not live in such a world. He could not adapt himself to his environment. So much strength used up! so much trouble taken! so much money laid out, his own and that of others! so many years lived on, full of pain and anguish!—and with what result? He should have to begin all again, from the very beginning; build up the edifice once more, which would finally fall and crush him again.

To sit on in the cab was impossible to one in his state of mind; he got out and went on foot down Piotrovska Street. Following Boroviecki's advice, he was going to see old Mr. Baum, but, fearing a second disappointment, desired to put it off; and moreover this street had for him an unaccountable attraction.

He plunged into the crowd on the side-walk, and drifted on, jostled and pushed. He looked inattentively at the display windows, bought some sweets for his wife at the confectioner's where he was wont to buy things, passed the time of day with a few acquaintances he met there, and went out again, his purchases made, towards those factories beyond whose lighted windows moved the silhouettes of men and machines. So he walked on through the noisy streets, becoming little by little blunted and callous to everything.

There was a ceaseless drizzle, but he did not mind it, nor even so much as put up his umbrella. He saw nothing but the counting-houses full of people, the goods passing by, the factories working at full speed.

"Good-evening, Mr. Travinski."

"Good-evening, Mr. Halpern." And he shook hands with Halpern, a tall man, rather untidily dressed.

"Out for a stroll about the town?"

"Yes, I had a mind for a walk."

"At twilight Lodz is very beautiful. I leave the office daily at this time, in order to get a walk and a look round."

"You are very, very fond of Lodz, I see."

"What would you have? When a man has lived here for fifty-six years, and has it always in sight, and knows everybody, he may well grow fond of it."

"And what's the news?"

"The news? Bad news: such a shower of protested bills as might be purchased by weight. But it's no matter!"

"How's that?"

"The rogues will go to the devil, and Lodz will stay on all the same. Mr. Travinski, I have seen here worse days than these in my time. After bad times, good times return. As it has been, so it will be; so why trouble about it? For the wise, all times are good times."

"And for the honest, when will times be good?" Travinski asked bitterly.

"Bah! my dear sir, for them there is heaven; what do good times matter to them?"

There was no answer, and they walked on in silence.

Halpern, who had his umbrella up because of the rain, continued to eye houses and factories lovingly as they went along. In that thin wan face of his, framed in a grey beard, his great black eyes shone with a phosphorescent glint. His head and features were like a patriarch's, overtopping a gaunt, stooping, skeleton-like frame, wrapped in a long, bedraggled overcoat that hung on his body as on a clothes-horse.

"I know every firm here, every house," Halpern went on to say with strong feeling. "I remember when Lodz had but twenty thousand inhabitants; there are three hundred thousand now! And I shall see it with its half a million; I will not die till then!"

"Provided it does not go down bodily to hell before!" Travinski growled.

"Ha ha! Don't say such ridiculous things, my dear sir. Lodz will stay on. You don't know the place. Have you heard what its turnover was last year? Two hundred and thirty millions of roubles!" he cried enthusiastically. "A fine sum that! Show me another town like it!"

"That's no great reason to praise it so. But you're right; there's not in all Europe such another town—for thieves," was the ill-humoured reply.

"Thieves or not thieves, all the same to me. What I care and wish for is that they may build more houses, more factories, lay out streets, contrive new communications, make new roads. I want Lodz, this Lodz of mine, to be full of magnificent palaces, splendid gardens, lots of movement, lots of commerce, lots of money!"

"Meanwhile I pray Heaven's thunderbolts may blast it! —Good-night, Mr. Halpern."

"Good-night, Mr. Travinski; but I trust this is not your last word about Lodz."

"My very last, and very sincere." And he called a cab.

"Poor wretch!" Halpern said, with scornful pity, and turned back, walking slowly, and gloating over houses, works, shops, storehouses, and passers-by, as one fascinated by the grandeur of the town. Walking on like a man in a trance, he paid no heed to the rain that wetted him in spite of his umbrella, nor to the jostling crowds that pushed him now against the houses, now into the gutter, nor to the carts and cabs that spattered him all over with mud at the crossings.

Travinski went to his home. The house stood at the bottom of a small garden; it faced the factory courtyard, and the side windows looked out on an empty lane. It had only one storey, but, being built in the neo-Gothic style, looked as if it had three. In several windows on the ground-floor the blinds were down, and it was bright inside.

Passing through a suite of rooms, beautifully furnished, warm, comfortable, and full of the aroma of hyacinths in flowerpot-stands, he reached the boudoir. So thick was the

carpet, and so lightly did he tread, that Nina, his wife, did not hear him come in. He retired a step or two, and called out: "Nina!" beyond the *portière*.

"Are you sitting alone so?" he said, taking a seat by her side.

"Who else could there be with me?" she answered in a sad voice.

"You have been crying."

"No, no!" she said in hasty denial, but turning her face away from the light.

"I have seen tears in your eyes."

"It was so sad to be alone!" she whispered, bending close to him and letting her head sink upon his bosom with a gesture of infinite tenderness, her tears welling up again. "I was expecting you; and the rain was so dreary, pattering upon the window-panes, and drumming on the roofs, and bubbling down the spouts, that I was afraid—afraid for you."

"Why afraid?"

"I cannot tell, but I was filled with evil forebodings.—Is all well with you, dear? Nothing the matter with your health?" she asked, putting her arms round his neck.

She stroked his hair, and kissed his delicate blue-veined forehead; her emerald eyes, flecked with golden spots, examined his thin, tired features with alarm. "What makes you sad?" she inquired.

"Awful weather: how can a man help feeling dismal?"

He disengaged himself from her embrace, and walked about the room. There was a fearful struggle in his heart at that moment. He knew that, could he but tell her everything—let her know the truth of their situation—such a confession would indeed be a great relief to him. But he also knew—when he glanced at her beautiful face, bent forward beneath the soft lamplight streaming over her superb auburn hair, touched with gold about the temples—that for nothing in the world would he make that confession.

His steps grew slower, while he inhaled the exquisitely pure atmosphere of his dwelling, with a feeling of relief that had in it something of bitterness as well. He gazed

round with glances of strange import on the elegant furniture, and the many ornaments—works of high art and great value—which they had these last two years collected in various foreign parts, careless of cost; for Nina, an aristocrat by nature, with the fondness of an artist for all things fair, and a soul like a sensitive plant, could not be at ease save amongst beautiful things.

He had never opposed her desires; and, indeed, he was himself fond of art, and loved to be surrounded with such works. But now, when ruin stared him in the face, he was in prey to intense agony—the fear of the morrow that would take from him not only these treasures, but the peace and happiness in which he had lived till now.

“What can I do?” he mused gloomily. Suddenly an idea came to him; he would say: “Father, I need your aid a second time.” At the thought he was seized with instantaneous delight, and looked around with joyful triumph. It was fleeting; he saw Nina rise and walk away through the suite of apartments, and followed her with eyes of troubled inquiry.

As he viewed her slender shapely figure, she turned round and smiled at him mysteriously. She came back directly, carrying a longish flat wooden box, that was of considerable weight.

“Can you guess what a surprise I have for you?”

“I cannot even try,” he said, turning pale on perceiving the post-office seals upon the box; it contained, he felt sure, some new and costly purchase.

“Brandini, our Florence dealer, has sent us a mosaic tablet that we looked at together last summer. You remember?”

“Did you order it?” he asked.

“Yes, I wanted to do my lord an unexpected pleasure.—Surely you are not displeased, are you?”

“No, no,” he said, kissing her hand. “Thanks, thanks with all my heart.”

“Open it; we shall both look at it again. I ordered the smaller and cheaper of the two, and it’s incredibly cheap.”

"Is the bill here?"

"Here it is: two thousand two hundred lire. Dirt cheap, isn't it?"

"Yes. It is indeed dirt cheap," he returned, as he undid the parcel with trembling hands.

The mosaic was wonderfully beautiful. On a square slab of black marble, with a few veins of a blue tint, a wreath had been laid down, made of violets, yellowish-white and lilac-coloured roses, and orchids strewn with a dust of gold. A butterfly, with wings the hue of rubies and of emeralds, seemed to be quivering along with the orchid on which it had alighted, while two others hovered just above the flowers. The whole was so marvellously executed, and created so powerful an illusion, that you would have liked to pick up the flowers, or catch a butterfly by the wing.

Nina had seen it before; yet even now she gave a cry of wonder, and viewed it in mute rapture for a long time.

"You are not looking, Casimir?"

"I have seen it. Really it is beautiful. A masterpiece in its way," he replied softly.

"Do you know, we shall have to put it in a wide frame of dull bronze, and hang it on a wall? It wouldn't do to make it into a stand," she said slowly, passing her slender fingers with delicate pressure over the outlines of the leaves and flowers, taking a subtle pleasure in the very touch of those colours.

"I must go out, Nina," her husband said, recollecting on a sudden that he had to see old Mr. Baum.

"Will it be for long? Come back soon, my darling, my only one!" she entreated him, with a close caress, pushing back his moustache to kiss him on the lips.

"In an hour's time. Only to Baum's, just by."

"I shall have tea ready for you."

"All right."

He kissed her and was going out, but stopped on the threshold and said: "Kiss me again, Nina, and wish me luck."

She did so, but with questioning eyes.

"I shall tell you all at tea."

She followed him into the antechamber, looking through the glazed doors till he disappeared in the night and the distance.

She went back to the boudoir and bent in contemplation over her mosaic. The entrance door opened and closed again; he was back.

"I had forgotten to tell you that Grosman, my former university fellow student, whose acquaintance you made in Switzerland last year, had his factory burnt down last night."

"What?"

"Yes, his factory and warehouses are burnt to the ground. Nothing has been saved."

"Poor fellow!" she exclaimed compassionately.

"Don't pity him: the fire has occurred just in time to set him on his legs."

"I don't know what you mean."

"His business was going badly; he was shaky, as they say. So, to mend matters, he arranged for a fire to take place and destroy both factory and storehouses, which he had insured very heavily, and in several companies. The indemnities to be paid will amount to four times his losses. He can now afford to laugh at everybody."

"So he did it on purpose?—Why, that's a crime!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"In the statute-book it is called so, and is punishable accordingly; but it is called 'a good stroke of business' in everyday language." He spoke hurriedly, not looking straight at her; and his face bore a wild and unnatural expression.

"And *he* did that? he who seemed such a singularly noble-minded man? Really, it's incredible. I remember how our conversations were always on the highest matters—righteousness and ethics."

"Ah well, what could he do? Confronted by ruin, he sent righteousness to the right-about, and put ethics off to a more convenient season. One can live without ethics, not without money," he said in a hard voice.

"No, no! Never! Rather die!" she burst out passionately. Her whole nature recoiled at the thought of crime. "Oh how sweet it is that you think otherwise, and that you have never done anything evil!—Had I not loved you till now, I should now have to worship your goodness and honesty!"

Casimir Travinski answered not a word, but kissed those eyes that flashed with indignation, those full, purple lips that so absolutely condemned men without moral principle, and the wickedness and turpitude of their lives; he kissed them impetuously, as if so to hide the deep humiliation that he felt at her words; as if so to quench a certain thought that had been kindled in his mind, and had dazzled him.

He went straight to Baum's factory, which stood opposite his own, just on the other side of the street, at the end of several large gardens. In the counting-house, he found no one but Max, sitting at a desk in his shirt-sleeves.

"Father is in the factory, but I can call him."

"No, I'll go myself. I have never yet been over your factory."

"Nothing to be seen. Beggary everywhere!" he said flip-pantly, sitting down again to work.

A glazed passage led from the counting-house to the first pavilion of the works. Darkness and silence reigned over the great courtyard, bounded on three sides severally by a three-storeyed factory pavilion. A faint light filtered through the windows; but some of the storeys were quite dark, and with no light but that mournfully shed at the ground-floor entrance door by some smoking naphtha lanterns, that showed the red bricks of the damp greasy walls. The dry clatter of the hand looms with their monotonous recurrence echoed through the passage, littered with cotton rubbish and fragments of worn-out looms, that aroused in the beholder a sense of weariness and melancholy. The stairs, the corridors, were empty; only occasionally did the click-clack of wooden soles resound, or some workman appear, to disappear again dimly and silently in the great rooms to which each separate corridor led. The slumberous stillness was un-

broken, except by the echo of footsteps, or the harsh stridor of the looms at work.

And in the factory chambers, too, all was just as empty, as dusky, as sleepy. These were large and rectangular, supported all down the middle by a double row of iron pillars, and crowded with hand looms of the Jacquard type, that stood in a double line close to the outspread rows of windows. One half of the looms was unused, and covered, as with grey moss, with the cotton down that had settled upon them. A number of lamps, each of them clamped to a pillar, lit the central gangway and the workmen winding yarn for spools with hand spinning-wheels.

The spinning-wheels droned drowsily; drowsily, too, did the workmen bend above them; and drowsily did a score of hand looms in use hum and whirl. These, in the wan yellowish lamplight overhead, looked like gigantic cocoons, entangled in myriads of variegated fibres; and among the cocoons the workmen moved about like silk-worms, weaving the stuffs according to pattern. They would bend forward mechanically, holding the sley fast with one hand, while the other drew the threads down and horizontally, the feet pedalling at the same time. The shuttles dashed with a buzz across the warps, like long, yellow beetles a-flying, and came back again with wearisome persistence.

The weavers were all elderly men, who looked with dull, apathetic eyes upon Travinski as he passed, and then went on weaving, drowsily, automatically.

He traversed all those chambers so void of life, with a feeling of pain. He was contemplating the dying throes of the hand-loom industry, still struggling with frantic persistence against the monsters whose enormous bulks, palpitating with energy and clamorous with irresistible power, were visible from the windows when he looked out.

He asked for Mr. Baum; he was answered by a motion of the head or hand; or, if words came, there was no raising of the voice. They all moved like sleeping men, men only half alive, indifferent yet sad—with the sadness of those darkened, taciturn, almost lethal chambers he was

now passing through, stumbling up against pillars, looms standing idle, and working men.

Going through two pavilions—a whole storey of each—he found vacancy, weariness, coming sleep, everywhere. Travinski was besides, on account of the state of his own affairs, given up to ever-increasing depression; he had completely ceased to hope in Baum's intervention, and walked on in the state of one who goes to see a dying man. For the factory, which had at one time employed five hundred hands, now gave work to fivescore only, and had every appearance of an organism sick unto death, and for whom the very trees that murmured outside seemed to be singing a death-chant.

Old Baum was in the third pavilion that looked out upon the street. Baum was sitting in a tiny room, at a writing-desk littered with heaps of samples cut into long shreds. They met in silence, with a powerful grasp of the hand on the part of the old man, who motioned the other to a chair.

"It is long since I saw you," he said at last.

Travinski excused himself, pleading the worries and pressure of business: but he talked on and on, without venturing to come to the point. What kept him back was not only the wretched state of the factory, but the sadness visible in Baum's face, and those mournful eyes perpetually wandering to the casement out of which he could perceive Müller's works, and all the windows ablaze.

Baum replied in few words; then paused, expecting to hear why the young man had called.

Travinski understood, and, cutting short some indifferent remarks, said concisely: "Sir, I have to ask you a favour." Here he stopped and caught his breath.

"My dear sir, I am all attention; go on."

Travinski briefly but exhaustively explained his situation, but hesitated to ask for assistance. The old man had knitted his brows, and he thought he saw a look of unwillingness in his eyes.

"We are all in the same boat," he said deliberately. "They," and he pointed to the great building outside the

window, "they are eating us up.—How can I aid you?" he added.

"Either with a loan, or by guaranteeing my bills."

"For how much?"

"I must absolutely fail unless I have ten thousand roubles," he replied in a low tone and timidly, feeling lest boldness should destroy the friendliness he saw in Baum's eyes.

"I have no cash at hand, but I'll do all I can for you. Give me your bill for that amount, and I will take up your liabilities for the same sum."

Travinski, starting up from the chair, thanked him with great effusion.

"Pray don't mention it, Mr. Travinski: my money is safe. I know you, and know how your business stands.—Here are some forms, please fill them at once."

A wave of bewilderment came over the young man. He was quite thrown off his balance, to find himself saved when he scarcely dared to hope. He very quickly filled up the forms, but ever and anon took a glance at Baum, walking about the room, or stopping at the window to survey Lodz with a severe and sombre gaze.

A whole quarter of the town was before his eyes: houses and factories and warehouses with numberless windows looked out into the night; and with them were the shadows of the workmen and the machines within; electric lights hung in the dusky, murky air, chimneys loomed there by hundreds, throwing out many a streak of white vapour that veiled the lights and the outlines of the buildings.

At times Baum looked out, at times he set to pacing the room again, with thin gaunt face bent forward. He was as tall as his son, but not so stout, and more lively in his movements. He was not much of a talker, and generally settled the most important matters in a few words. A quiet, even reticent man, he was easy-going with his wife and children, occasionally weak; but nevertheless there were points on which he never yielded. His kindness was inexhaustible, and proverbial in Lodz; and yet he was close-fisted at home to the point of eccentricity.

"At what date will you have me meet them?"

"Whenever it may be convenient for you," he said, opening the door to the next room, in which all the looms were working.

He closed the door again, put his hands into the pockets of his old grey threadbare caftan, and looked out upon the town once more.

The telephone sounded; it was the only modern improvement in Baum's factory.

"It's for you," said Baum. "A call from Boroviecki."

Travinski, amazed, put his ear to the receiver.

"My dear fellow, I have learned from your wife where you are now. Well, I have gone over my accounts, and find I can lend you five thousand roubles, but for only two months. Will that do?"

"Will it do? I am delighted," he cried warmly. "Where are you phoning from?"

"From your study. Mrs. Travinska has her eye on me."

"Wait for me, I shall be with you directly."

"All right."

"Boroviecki wants to see me; do you know him?"

"Only by sight. I am not one to mix with the great people of Lodz: the Bucholces, the Mendelsohns, the Salcmans, the Meyers, and the other vermin. I know them all, though; the younger ones by sight only, the others from Michel's, where we meet occasionally. Once we were better acquainted; but that was in the days of old, when there still were honest men in Lodz, and no millionaires as yet. Such times those were! You young folk have no idea of them. I was then with old Geyer, and we were the biggest firm in all Lodz. Then neither steam, nor engines, nor electricity, nor notes of hand, nor shoddy, nor 'playtas,' no, nor factories set secretly on fire, were so much as heard of."

"And yet what is had to come about."

"I know, I know: the old order must give place to the new.—But there, what's the use of talking?" He dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand, and looked over the bills of exchange. He was so much moved with impotent

indignation that for some time he was unable to speak, while he signed the bills.

"Are you in a hurry to be off?"

"I am, and have only now to thank you most heartily for your aid."

"No need whatever. I am only sorry you were not in Lodz fifty years ago, and had a factory here then. You do not fit into Lodz as it is now; at present, honest manufacturers have nothing to do here."

Travinski, who was hastening home, took his leave; they merely settled some points concerning the dates of payment, and parted.

The sirens' shrill notes now rent the air, to announce the end of the day's work; one after another the factory lights were quenched, and darkness took their place.

When the workmen had left, Baum went to his house, which stood in the garden in front of the factory pavilion that had its back to the street. Once in his room, he changed clothes, putting on a light jacket and embroidered slippers, covered his head, on which the hair, though grey, was still abundant, with a skull-cap ornamented with white beads, and entered the dining-room, where the cloth was laid for supper.

Max was sitting at a table, and showing his nieces, who had their arms round his neck, how to build toy houses out of wooden bricks. The girls were giggling continually, and chattering like magpies.

Mrs. Baum sat in a spacious easy-chair, busy knitting. She was about sixty, with a pleasant face that bore the marks of ill health, silver spectacles on a long nose, grey hair combed smooth over a low, bulging forehead, pale-looking eyes, a faded mouth, a blue apron, in a pocket of which was the skein of cotton with which she knitted. There was much sweetness in her voice and her smile. She was always counting stitches, flashing her needles, and smiling: at her son and grand-daughters, at her daughter, who pored over a book, at Frau Augusta, her cousin, who from time immemorial had taken all the housekeeping in hand, at the two sideboards, which stood close together, at the stove, at

the old glazed cabinet, full of china plates and figurines, at Frau Augusta's two tabby-cats, that followed her about everywhere, and rubbed their backs against her dress, purring—in short, she was smiling at everybody and everything, with the fixed, faint, everlasting smile one sees on the faces of the dead.

Peace prevailed throughout the dwelling—the warm glow of an old-fashioned middle-class home. They all had lived so long with one another, they fitted together so well, that even without words a glance sufficed to say what they meant, by mutual understanding.

On leaving the office, the old gentleman left his troubles behind him, and always brought home a serene and radiant face. He had various matters to chat about with his wife, he at times had a dispute with Max; for twenty years he had bantered Frau Augusta. He played with his grandchildren, of whom there were always plenty, for his four daughters had long been married; and he regularly read the *Kölnische Zeitung*, and one of the Polish papers. Every evening, too, he would listen to some sentimental novel out of the *Familienblatt*, which was a delight to both his wife and the daughter present.

So he spent every evening, and this time it was just the same. During all the supper there was a ceaseless flow of talk. He himself had seated the children, and saw to them with great attention, joking meanwhile with Frau Augusta, whose answer was always the same:

"Ya, ya, Herr Baum," and she would smile at him vacantly, showing her long, yellow, uneven teeth.

"Where is Mr. Joseph? Have you kept him for the second serving?"

"Mr. Joseph is coming presently"; and indeed he came in, before she had gathered in her capacious lap the two inseparable tabbies.

Joseph was a sort of practising clerk in the office; left destitute as a boy, he had been for several years the ward of Baum. He was prodigiously tall, very long as to arms and legs, with a large head, hair always in disorder, and a round

face in constant perspiration. Moreover, an extremely shy, gawky fellow, and much in the habit of knocking against doorways and furniture.

He came in not too awkwardly, but, seeing all eyes fixed upon him, began by getting entangled in the floor-cloth, hit hard against a sideboard as he passed, stumbled against Max's chair; and, quite upset by so many mishaps, sat down to supper as red as a beetroot. Though he had finished his classes at the industrial school, and was now eighteen years old, he remained as simple as a child: modest, submissive, and so gentle that his eyes seemed for ever to be asking pardon for venturing to live among people.

He lived in great fear of Max, who as a rule made fun of him. Just then, seeing that everything Joe had to eat slipped out of his hands, Max said, laughing: "I shall have to take you away from Frau Augusta, and take you under my wing."

"Let him be, Max; we shall take better care of him than you would," his sister said.

"A molly-coddle! that's what you'd make of him!"

"And what would you make of him?"

"A man!"

"You'd take him to taverns, to dancing-rooms—and so on. Oh, Fritz has told me of your bachelor's life more than once, and with disgust."

"Ha ha! Fritz disgusted, was he? A capital joke that!—My dear Bertha, you little know your husband!"

Here the father said in a whisper: "Max, do not take away her illusions."

"I don't want to, father; but it makes me wild to see her so taken in by that jackass that she believes all he says like gospel truth."

"Remember, Max, it is of my husband you are speaking."

"We have to remember that too often, Father and I. If he did not belong to our family——"

"If not, what then?" she asked, with her eyes full of tears, and ready to defend her husband.

"If not, we should turn him out of doors!" he answered

in a fury. "You wanted me to tell you. Well, there you are! And make the most of it; cry away. Only remember, it will make you ugly: tears swell the eyes, and make the nose red."

But his sister Bertha had burst out crying, and left the room.

Mrs. Baum gently reproved him for his harsh words.

"Mother, let be; I know what I am saying. Fritz is a miserable beast, who cares only for the tavern, not for the factory. With Bertha he passes himself off for a poor unfortunate man, who succeeds in nothing and overworks himself for his wife and children's sake! Just as if, from the very day of their wedding, Father had not kept them all at his own expense!"

"Hush, Max," the old man said; "why rake up all that?"

"Because an end must be put to this once for all; because this is not common vice and debauchery, but eternal sponging upon you, Father. We are all working hard—in order for my brothers-in-law to have a good time!"

Here he broke off. The bell in the hall had rung. He went to open the door, and ushered in Boroviecki.

His father was somewhat embarrassed and cold in manner; but Mrs. Baum received him very cordially, and at once introduced him to Bertha, who had returned at the sound of the bell, and was curiously observing the only specimen she knew of a real live Don Juan in Lodz, where he had been talked of so many a year.

They pressed him to take tea, but he made excuses. "I have had supper at the Travinskis: on my way home, I just popped in to see Max on business for an instant. I shall have to go at once."

But Frau Augusta would take no refusal; he had to sit down, and she poured out tea for him with her sweetest smile; while Bertha, whose voice was still tremulous with tears, entreated him to take it, and Mrs. Baum, all smiles, set some pastry before him.

He accepted, and, being in a good humour, soon had the whole company at his feet. He talked with Mrs. Baum of her

grandchildren, flattered Bertha by praising her little ones, and spoke enthusiastically of Heyse's last short novel, which lay on the table, as he saw. He took Frau Augusta's heart by storm, playing with her two pets, which came purring on to his shoulders, rubbing their coats on his face; though this irritated him to such a degree that he had a good mind to catch one of the cats by the tail and dash it against the stove. He had a kind word even for Joseph, and was so friendly and genial, and withal had such gentlemanly manners, that in twenty minutes they were all enchanted with him. Even old Mr. Baum, who knew the man well, and had no liking for him, unbent sufficiently to take part in the conversation. Augusta had been so taken with him that she was again and again bringing him cups of tea, and taking new dainties and relishes out of the cupboard; and her smile every now and then laid bare one or another of her teeth.

Max was mute, and gazed on all this with a malicious grin. But tired of the scene at length, and satisfied that Charles too had had enough of it, he rose and took him into the adjoining room.

Silence then fell upon those at the table. The children, sitting with their grandfather, became deeply interested in their playthings. Joseph began to read aloud, according to the established custom. Mrs. Baum knitted. Bertha, while listening, looked from time to time into the room where Charles and Max were sitting, the door having been left ajar. Frau Augusta cleared away the tea-things and stroked her cats; but ever and anon she would stop, raise up her tiny little black eyes, set in her face like grains of pepper in a pan of frying butter, and sigh profoundly.

"A wonderfully pleasant atmosphere is that of your family!" Charles was saying to Max. He had thrown himself back in an arm-chair, and looked round with delight at the family circle in the dining-room.

"Once a year it is. Not oftener. Quite enough of it so."

"And that's much—to have just one day in the year to forget the world, and business, and all the vexations of life, and feel oneself happy with one's family!"

"But you are going to be married, and will soon have enough—perhaps more than enough—of family bliss!"

"Do you know, I am going into the country for a few days?"

"To your fiancée?"

"It's the same thing: Anne lives with my father."

"I should like to make her acquaintance."

"I can take you with me, if only for a few hours."

"A few hours only? Why so?"

"Because you could not stand it any longer; you would die of boredom. Ah, how tedious life is there, how empty, how grey! You have no idea. If it were not for Anne, I could not bear that place—home of my forefathers though it is!"

"And of your father as well."

"Oh, my father! He's one of the now mummified nobility of the bygone democratic days, and is himself a raging democrat—but a nobleman all the same—as all our democrats are. A very curious type!" he broke off with an ironical smile. Yet his eyes were moist with emotion, for he loved his father very dearly.

"When do you start?"

"As soon as ever Moritz is back—no! as soon as Knoll returns. I wired for him to-day. Bucholtz is very ill: his old heart-disease again. To-day, and in my presence, he had a fearful attack. They only just managed to pull him through. But that didn't prevent him, as soon as he came to, from abusing me in such language that I felt it my duty to resign my position."

"Can you talk so calmly of all this?" Max exclaimed, seeing Charles rise and scrutinize certain tissues of mixed red and yellow material, on which the candlesticks and lamps were standing.

"You see, sooner or later, I should have had to resign. Only I saw my opportunity then; it was excellent, for my contract ends in October."

"That is, you had the opportunity of answering abuse with abuse, and giving up your situation besides."

Charles laughed, walked about the room, and looked at a series of drawings that hung upon the walls.

"Wisdom in the conduct of life, my boy," he said, "consists in being indignant or amused, angry, or at play or at work, at the right time. Even in withdrawing at the right time from a situation.—Whose portraits are these?"

"Oh, they're our family menagerie!—I quite understand how important all you say is; but as to myself, I never could seize upon such a 'right time.' I could not bring myself to wait for it: I always act on the spur of the moment!"

"*Do ye judgment without mercy upon him that hath not been merciful.*" Charles read aloud this verse from the Bible; it was embroidered in red silk on canvas, set in an oaken frame, and hung up between two windows.

"Oh, what you're reading is a pious text. We had it embroidered and hung up there. Our old German fashion, you know."

"Well, it's a fashion I like. These verses from the Bible give the place an original tone."

"So they do.—Travinski has been here."

"I know, I was with him just now. Your old man has assisted him."

"I guessed as much. He did not speak to me, and his eyes would not meet mine. Do you know the amount?"

"Ten thousand roubles."

"Blood of a dog!—Oh, that German sentimentalism!" And Max swore under his breath.

"The money's quite safe," Charles said to quiet him, while gazing at the velvet-upholstered furniture with its *guipure* covers.

"Oh, I know. That idiot of a Travinski isn't capable of making so much as ten groschen dishonestly. What I take to heart is the way Father does something for everybody in whom he believes; and of course they all try to get at him. Our factory is hardly going at all, our warehouses are crammed so full of ready-made stuffs that we have no room for any more, and no one can tell if the season is to be a

good one; and here the old man is playing at philanthropy and friendly feeling, and trying to rescue others!"

"Quite true. And he *has* rescued Travinski."

"And will be ruined, and will ruin me."

"You have one comfort: your father is the most honest man in Lodz."

"Don't you jeer at me. I'd rather he were the most judicious one."

"Really, you are beginning now to talk just like Welt."

"Like Moritz? And you, are your thoughts better than his?"

"I think otherwise, that's all. Better, worse, honestly, dishonestly, those are mere dialectical differences."

"Ah, and how did you like that ideal Mrs. Travinska?"

"Briefly, I define her, in the style of Sienkiewicz, as a princess out of a fairy-tale."

"Don't you exaggerate? Where could Travinski have met with such a romantic heroine?"

"No, I don't exaggerate. I'll even add that she is full of beauty and refinement.—As to Travinski, do not forget, Max, that he is both strikingly handsome and well-bred. Don't look at him merely as an unsuccessful cotton-mill-owner, but as a man. Now, as a man, he is an exceptional specimen, refined by many generations of culture. He has told me how his father, an extremely wealthy Volhynian landowner, had all but compelled him to open a factory. The old man's head is turned with the idea of great industries, and thinks it the patriotic duty of the nobility to work together with the other classes in order to raise the industrial level here. Such industries, he even thinks, will prove the regeneration of his class.—Well, Travinski is about as good for that sort of thing as you would be yourself for dancing the mazurka; but he obeyed his father, whose capital is now little by little diminishing—melting away in his son's spinning concerns, in which his father's woods and lands are all spinning to nothing. He sees it and feels it himself; no one better. Our Promised Land of Lodz must needs become an accursed land for him; yet in spite of all he is

struggling persistently against failure and ill luck, which he is obstinately resolved to overcome."

"Now and then men of that stamp pull through by sheer stubbornness.—Does she know anything of his position?"

"I think not. He is the sort of man who would perish himself rather than let anyone dear to him suffer any trouble, or get wind of any evil news."

"Why, but that means—that he's in love with his fairy princess!"

"They are both of them more than in love. It's almost worship—mutual adoration; I could read it quite distinctly in their looks."

"And why is she never to be seen anywhere?"

"Don't know. But you cannot imagine how greatly her conversation and her motions charm one, and with what wonderfully supple grace her head is poised."

"Oho! you do speak of her very warmly indeed!"

"I see you grin at the guess you've made; but it's a silly one and quite wrong. I am not, and I could not possibly be, in love with her, though I admire her as a type of beauty whose expression is spiritual in the highest degree. But that is not my type. Yet—yet—— Truly, beside her all our Lodz beauties are like common percale beside the purest silk."

"Why not dye that silk your colour?"

"Let me alone, with your jests that smell of the vat."

"Are you going? Then we leave together."

"H'm. I have business in town."

"Which means that I should be in the way?"

"You have caught my meaning wonderfully.—Kurovski sends his compliments; will be here on Saturday; asks you to supper—nothing out of the way—and inquires in his letter whether the fat German (that's you) has grown any thinner, or the thin Jew (that's Moritz) any fatter."

"He must have his joke. Did Bucholc order any of his chemicals?"

"We have been using them this whole month."

"Then he must be getting on. I have heard that Kessler

and Endelman have also made arrangements with him."

"They have; he wrote me so. He's on the way, and in a fair way, too, to make a fortune."

"Let him, and he'll be a partner along with us."

"Think so, Max?"

"Think so? I know it. Surely there are no difficulties in the way?"

"There are not, and we shall do so. By and by, if you find Horn at our apartment—he was to meet me there, you know—tell him to wait till I come, and that I shall come in two hours at the latest."

After talking over the telegram from Moritz, Charles took leave of Max and the others, and went out with Joseph, who, once outside the house, made him a deep bow, and disappeared suddenly down a darksome lane.

CHAPTER X



JOSEPH, who lodged with the Baum family, was going home to see his parents. The Yaskulskis, for such was Joseph's family name, lived far out, quite beyond the old church, in a lane that bore no name, and ran in front of the well-known streamlet which served as a drain to carry off the refuse of the factories.

The lane itself was like a string of rubbish-heaps, and the dumping-ground of the great town. Along this, Joseph made his way swiftly, and presently came to a house of raw, unplastered brick, the windows of which were lit from basement to garret like one huge lantern, and swarmed with people whose lives were spent there.

In the corridor, quite dark, reeking with foul smells and begrimed with the mud that had been brought in, he groped about till he found the bannisters (clammy to the touch with dirt) and hurried downstairs to the basement. Then he entered a long passage encumbered with rubbish and domestic utensils. This too was befouled with mud, and full of noises and stench. Light there was none, save that of a small smoky lamp which hung from the ceiling. He steered his way along through all the encumbrances, till he reached the end of the passage.

There he was met by a whiff of warm air, bearing the effluvia of cellar-damp, of decaying matter, and of the moisture that trickled in brown streaks down the whitewashed walls of the dwelling-room.

A troop of children rushed at once to meet and welcome him.

"I thought you were not coming at all to-night!" said a tall, gaunt woman, who stooped very much; she had a sallow, sunken face and large black eyes.

"Dear Mother, I am very late. Mr. Boroviecki came to see us—Mr. Bucholc's manager; and I durst not leave till he left too.—Has Father not come home yet?"

"He has not," she answered in a dull voice, and went to pour out the tea at the fire-place, separated from the rest of the room by a curtain of coarse stuff, suspended on a wire.

Joseph followed her, taking with him some provisions he had brought.

"And to-day I got my week's salary from old Mr. Baum, Mother; please put it by." He laid down four roubles and a few kopeks; his pay was five roubles weekly.

"Don't you keep anything for yourself?"

"I want nothing, Mother. I am only sorry I can't yet earn so much as you need," he replied with great simplicity, but without the timidity that always hampered him so much with strangers.

He cut the bread into slices, and was about to return to the other side of the curtain.

"Joe! my dearest boy, my darling child!" his mother whispered in a voice that shook with tears; and tears indeed came streaming down her worn cheeks, and sprinkling her son's head as she embraced him.

He kissed her hand dutifully, and returned with a beaming face to the rest of the family, seated on the floor near a tiny grated window that opened upon the side-walk close to the pavement. There were four of them; the youngest two, the eldest ten years old. They played together, but very quietly for an elder brother, thirteen years old, lay sick in bed. It was consumption, and his bed had been pushed away from the wall a little, because of the moisture that was trickling down and might wet the bed-clothes.

"Tony!" Joseph said, bending over the pillow and the bright-hued coverlet, to a pallid sea-green face, out of which glassy eyes were staring with the tragic immobility of one close to death.

The sick boy did not answer, but only moved his lips, and fixed his shining grey eyes on his brother, then touched his cheeks in a childlike caress with his thin fingers. A wan smile, like the smile of flowers that are fading, passed over those pale lips, and gave life to the glance of the dying boy.

Joe sat down by his side, set his pillows straight, and combed the lad's fair hair, that was matted and dishevelled, but as soft as silk. Then he spoke again: "Tony, are you better to-day?"

"Better," the boy answered, very low, smiling at the same time and nodding, as to confirm what he said.

"Ah! you will quite soon be all right!" He snapped his fingers with satisfaction. Healthy and powerfully built as he was himself, he had not the least idea of the hopelessness of his brother's condition.

Yes, Tony was dying slowly of consumption. The disease had followed upon a sharp attack of influenza. It had been aided in its course by the misery which had for two years preyed upon the whole family, ever since they had left the country to come and live in Lodz; aggravated besides by the look of wretchedness in his mother's face, sadder and sadder every day; by the bearing of his younger brothers and sisters, ever more and more hushed and subdued; by the eternal clattering of the looms, to be heard almost ceaselessly overhead, day and night; by the deadly moisture that streamed down the walls of their lodgings; by the noisy quarrelling and even fighting too often to be heard in the neighbouring rooms, both in the basement and overhead; and most of all by the consciousness, daily more and more intense, of the misery in which they were plunged.

The lad had been greatly matured by the evil fortune that had overwhelmed them, and the lingering malady had done much to develop the quiet dreamy side of his nature, quiet and dreamy as it always had been.

"Joe, are the fields not green yet?" he asked.

"No; we are only half through March to-day."

"A pity!" And a shadow of pain came into his eyes.

"All will be green in a month, and you will be all right again; and we shall club together and go a-maying."

"Ah, you'll go, and Mamma, and Papa, and Sophy and Adam and all of you; but I shall not go, not I!" And he shook his head, while the colour came to his pale cheeks in two pink patches.

"Joe, we shall go too!" the other children cried, coming to the lad's bed-side.

"Yes, you will, but in a carriage," he answered with gravity.

"In a carriage with four chestnut horses!" one of the little girls put in, pressing her tiny head of flaxen hair against Joe's knees, while she looked round at her brothers and sisters out of bright eyes overflowing with gladness.

"Gee-up!" a chubby little boy called out, pushing a chair before him, and belabouring it with a whip made of his mother's apron-strings.

"Yes, you'll go, Hela; so will Ignatz and Bolo and Kazio."

Mrs. Yaskulska looked on in silence, wiping her eyes furtively.

Even Tony felt elated and hummed a tune, while Joseph's eyes were fixed on his mother. She presently leaned over the table, and for a while quite gave herself up to the memories of a past that was not very long past and still lived intensely in the hearts of them all. Especially was Tony absorbed in them; his whole soul was carried away in the past. He sang no longer, nor was the present anything to him; he had gone back in mind—back to that beloved country place which he was dying to see once more; just as a flower will die when planted in the wrong soil.

Presently the mother's voice called them all: "Children, come to tea!"

Tony woke immediately, feeling quite bewildered. Where was he? He looked round in amazement at the room, and the walls green with damp, on which their forefathers' portraits were rotting, together with the rest of the family; these had been saved from the wreck, and remained amid the present dire realities. His eyes shone with tears, as he lay

speechlessly and dreamily contemplating the dingy brown drops of moisture glistening on the walls.

Joe carried the table into the middle of the room, and they were all seated round it presently. The children fell greedily upon the bread and tea. Joseph alone ate nothing, looking with a father's wistful gaze upon those flaxen heads, those eyes so eagerly watching the bread as it disappeared, and on their mother, who, with her face of a martyr and her stooping, broken-down frame, paced the room like an affectionate shadow, and embraced them all in one look of boundless love. Her high-caste face, stamped as it was with the mark of intense sorrow on its extremely delicate and comely features, turned most frequently towards the sick boy.

No one spoke during tea.

The weaving looms were incessantly at work, whirring overhead; the huge spinning-wheels hummed and droned, causing an endless vibration all through the house. Now and then there would come through the window a confused noise from the street, filling the room with din; or there would be heard footsteps splashing through the mud, or the clattering of passing carts and the jingle of harnesses.

The lamp, which had a green shade over it, shed a softened light over the room, and only shone bright upon the children's heads.

Suddenly and violently the door was thrown open, and a girl came in, noisily stamping her feet clear of mud upon the threshold.

She kissed Mrs. Yaskulska lovingly, embraced the children, who came rushing to her with cries of joy, shook hands with Joe, and bent over the sick lad.

"Good-evening, Tony; here are some violets for you!" she exclaimed, and taking a bunch of them from her opulent bosom, tossed it on to his breast.

"Thanks. How good of you to have come, Sophy. Have you come straight from home?"

"No, I was at Mrs. Shulc's, where Felek played on the concertina. I listened for some time; then I ran over to Mary, from whom I have come to see you on my way."

"Is your mother well?"

"Thank you, she is. So much so that she has been quarrelling with us till Father went off to the beer-house, and I ran away for the whole evening.—Do you know, Joe, that Baum junior of yours is a very handsome young spark?"

"Have you made his acquaintance?"

"I was shown him to-day by a working-girl—a wool-carder."

"He's a very good, kind man," Joseph answered most earnestly, and gazed at Sophy, who could not remain seated a moment, but either must assist Mrs. Yaskulski with the tea, or look over the books which stood on an old chest of drawers, or turn up the lamp, or examine the covering of the sewing-machine, or stroke the children's hair: in short, she spun round the room like a peg-top. That mournful, dreary dwelling was filled by her with the abounding life and health which emanated from her resolute and very pretty face and keen black eyes.

There was something not a little masculine in her, in her emotions and her decided manners; it came from her work in the factory, where she was in continual contact with men.

"Mrs. Yaskulski, you ought not to wear that kerchief on your head; it makes you look plain."

"What a funny remark, Sophy!"

"But oh dear!" and she slapped her thigh, caught at her shapely nose, with its daintily chiselled little nostrils—and then set to arranging her hair in front of a small mirror that hung upon the wall.

"My dear Sophy, you are positively growing prettier every day!"

"Bah! Young Kessler told me the same yesterday—Kessler, who is at the head of our spinning department." And she laughed merrily.

"Are you pleased at it?"

"It's all one to me. All those young sparks tell me the same, but I—I make fun of them!" Her bright red lips pouted indeed, but the satisfaction caused by the young men's homage was to be seen shining in her face.

She went on chattering, babbling, telling all sorts of particulars about the factory girls at her place, and the foremen, and the directors. Then she assisted Mrs. Yaskulska in undressing the little ones and putting them to bed. These proceedings they were greatly averse to, for they all were enchanted with her; she was so nice to them and entertained them so well.

"Do you know, madam," she went on to say, "I have sold those two crochet-work coverlets and a couple of jackets. You'll get the money on Saturday, when the salaries are paid."

"God bless you, Sophy!"

"Don't mention it. Please make some other jackets like them, only more richly ornamented—and I'll get all our girls to buy them."

"Who was it bought the coverlets?"

"Oh! young Kessler. He saw me showing them in the office this afternoon, took them home, and told me his mother had purchased them. Didn't even try to haggle! A fine fellow.—Tony! do you recollect how we all danced last year on Mary's name-day?"

"Of course I do!" he replied with alacrity.

"Well, this year the factory is to arrange an excursion for us all; we are to go to Ruda. I must go there with Father—I must, no matter what Mother says or does.—Joe, did you amuse yourselves last Sunday?"

"We did, but Adam was not with us. Staying at home?"

"At home? He? Why, he has not spent his Sundays at home for a month. I suppose he is always with those people of Spacerova Street. The wrong sort, I have no doubt!"

"Don't say such a thing, Sophy!" Joe pleaded. "I know both Mrs. Lapinska and Mrs. Stecka quite well. They are true ladies, who have lost their property as we have ours, and are now working hard like us all."

"Well, I can't say. Mamma told me; but now and then she tells fibs till all is blue. And then she has a grudge against them, because Adam is always at their lodgings."

"Adam" was Malinovski, the young man with ashen-

blond hair and green eyes who frequented the Colony; he was Sophy's brother.

"Does your father work at night, Sophy?"

"Oh yes, he's on the move from 10 P. M. to 6 A. M."

The silence which followed was broken by Joe, saying: "Mother, I met Stanley Vilchek in Piotrovska Street at noon to-day. You know: the boy who coached me in the sixth form. The son of the village organist at Kurov. Surely you remember him, Mother. We had him once staying with us for all the midsummer holidays."

"What is he doing here in Lodz?"

"All sorts of things, he told me. He is employed in the railway parcels-delivery office, but he does lots of other things besides. Keeps horses and carts coals from the station to the factories. Has a timber depot in Mikolajevska Street, and expects to be opening a shop in Warsaw, and selling remnants from the factories. He wanted me to take a position there in his storehouse."

"What did you say to that?"

"I refused decidedly. He may perhaps pay a higher salary, but who knows for how long he will pay it?"

"Is he good-looking?" Sophy inquired.

"Very much so indeed, and so elegantly dressed that he might be a factory-owner at least. He sends you his compliments, Mother, and said he would come and see us."

"My dear Joe, it's better he should not. Why must he see how—and where—we are living? No, no; his visit would be very painful to me. The Lord God grant him every success! but why should he find out how we have come down?"

"But you see, madam, such a man may now and then be of use——"

"My dear Sophy, we shall never ask such a man to be of use," she interrupted rather impatiently. Her pride was revolted at the thought of receiving assistance from a man whom, as a lad, she herself had assisted to enter a high school—the son of the village organ-player, who, when he came to their manor, came no farther in than the hall,

to receive donations in kind of various sorts. The mere possibility of such a thing was an outrage to her family dignity.

"Father is coming in, and the doctor along with him," said Tony, who had heard them in the passage.

Yaskulski then entered, preceded by Vysocki—of whom they said he had more patients than any other doctor in Lodz, but had to live at his mother's expense, for all were paupers whom he treated.

He greeted everybody, let his eyes rest an instant longer on Sophy, who had placed herself so as to be well in view, and then proceeded to auscultate Tony.

Sophy assisted him with such superfluous zeal in lifting Tony up in bed, and was so constantly hovering and fluttering about them, that the doctor lost patience and said: "Please leave us by ourselves."

Highly offended, she withdrew behind the curtain, where she found Yaskulski, sitting on the coal-box and in a whining voice pleading his own cause before his wife.

"No, as I love honour, I am not intoxicated.—I met Stavski—you remember him?—He has come to Lodz, destitute: the Germans have turned him out of his estate, as they have done to us. We went to the Polish Hotel, wept over our miseries, drank a nip of vodka each—and that was all—all our orgy! Afterwards I was middleman for a Jew horse-dealer, and we took a stirrup-cup together—and that was all we drank!—Then I was at Shwarc's; the place was taken already, but there's a situation that will possibly be vacant in the railway storehouses. I shall go to the manager tomorrow, and hope to succeed in getting the place."

"Yes. Just as you have always succeeded," she said bitterly, but in a low voice, while she was anxiously watching Tony and the doctor.

Yaskulski said no more, and stared vacantly at the lamp. His puffy face, his blond, wavy moustache, and all about him bore witness to dire helplessness and almost tragical incompetency. He was an incapable in the fullest and deepest sense of the word. It was through inefficiency that he had lost

all his own, all his wife's property; through inefficiency that he had for two years failed to obtain a situation; for if he ever got one through his friends' exertions, he was sure to lose it for lack of energy.

Yaskulska, his wife, had taken to sewing jackets, pinafores, and women's caps. Every Sunday she went to offer them for sale in the Old Town. She had attempted to take in the washing of the working-people in the house; her strength had failed her. She had tried boarding them, but it would not turn to account. And so, though she knew she was not proficient, she had set about giving lessons to the daughters of foremen and railway officials: lessons in Polish, in French, in piano-playing. By all these various ways and means of earning money, and all her hard work for eighteen hours a day, she got ten roubles a month!

But she got them, and the family did not die of starvation; and in so far she was a success. Her position had become somewhat less intolerable, since Joe got his salary—twenty roubles a month—and put the entire sum into her hands.

"Well, Doctor?" she asked, advancing towards him as soon as he had ended his auscultation.

"No change. Same treatment as before. A little cognac may be given him in his milk."

He took a bottle and a box of powders out of his overcoat.

"And what do you think of the case?" she asked, but so low that he guessed rather than heard what she said.

"I can say nothing for sure. We shall have to send him into the country as soon as it gets warm. I have thought of the "summer colonies"; but they are not for him. All the same, I could obtain places there for the two elder children, and so send them with the others; a few weeks in the country would do them lots of good."

She faltered a word or two of thanks.

"Cheer up, now," he said, turning to the boy; "we shall see in summer how the grass grows. All right?"

"All right, sir."

"Ah! do you like reading?"

"Oh, that I do! But I have read all our books through. Even the old almanacs."

"To-morrow I'll send you some new books; but you'll have to tell me about all you've read."

Tony could not speak for joy, but squeezed the doctor's hand very hard.

"Then good-bye. See you again in a few days."

He laid his hand caressingly on the boy's clammy forehead, wet with perspiration, and took his overcoat.

"Doctor," Tony said timidly, "these violets smell so sweet! Dear good doctor, please take them. You are as kind to me as Mother or as Joe; please take them! Sophy gave them to me: take them, please!" So he begged him, and with such depth of entreaty that Vysocki was greatly moved: he accepted the violets with a smile, and put them into a button-hole of his overcoat.

As he was going out, Mrs. Yaskulska tried to press a rouble into his hand. He started back as if stung.

"No foolishness, if you please, madam!" he said in an angry tone.

"But really, Doctor, I cannot let you take so much trouble, give so much time—I cannot."

"Your boy has paid me already. Good-night, madam!"

And he disappeared down the passage, with old Yaskulski at his heels, who was to show him the way back to Piotrowska through the slums.

"Oh, that stupid pride of the nobility!" he grumbled, walking so fast meanwhile that it was hard work for Yaskulski to overtake him.

"Have you nothing for me, Doctor?" he inquired hesitatingly, as he at last came up with him.

"Situations there are; only it is necessary to work in them."

"What! am I unwilling then?"

"You both can work and are willing to work; but in Lodz that is not sufficient; you must know how.—Why did you not remain at Weisblatt's? It was not a bad situation."

"Upon my word of honour, I was not in fault. The manager persecuted me till I could bear it no longer, and I was continually insulted."

"If a man insults you, knock him down, but take care to give no occasion for gibes and insults.—I have had to blush for you!"

"But why? Surely mine was honest work."

"I know; but so miserable that I was ashamed."

"I worked as well as I could and as I knew," Yaskulski said in a voice tremulous with tears.

"No whining now, no blubbering! What the devil! you are not trying to palm off a blind horse on me. I can believe your word without more ado."

"On my word of honour, sir, you are outrageous!"

"Then go back home and God speed you! I shall find my way to Piotrovska Street by myself."

"Adieu," Yaskulski answered curtly, and turned on his heel.

Vysocki had been greatly exasperated, and it had been too much for him, but his brutality towards a man so helpless now struck him with shame.

"Mr. Yaskulski!" he called after him.

"What is it, Dr. Vysocki?"

"Possibly you need money; I can lend you a few roubles."

"No—on my word of honour—but—but I thank you."

He was clearly weakening, giving way; he had already forgotten the insult.

"Here you are; you will return them when you come into that legacy from your aunt." He put three roubles into his hand and walked away.

Yaskulski eyed the money by the light of a street lamp, sighed, dropped a tear, and crawled home.

Vysocki found his way to Piotrovska Street, and walked along slowly, disgusted with all the misery he met with daily. He looked round with sad, tired eyes at the town before him, now no longer noisy; at the factories that loomed out of their courtyards like black slumbering monsters in their dens; at the numberless casements, gleaming still—eyes,

as it were, that peered into the moist darkness of the night. He felt oddly uneasy and out of sorts; there was growing in his mind an unaccountable sense of fear, and of such lawless waves of disquietude as—without any external cause—will at times swoop down, lay siege to the heart, and weaken and terrify a man to such an extent that he dreads lest the houses he sees may fall and crush him, and he stops short, awaiting some horrible news, and feeding his thoughts with every sort of calamity that a human being may have to meet with.

Such was the mood in which Vysocki now strode on. He had no wish to go home, nor even, though passing close by, to enter a coffee-house and read the papers. All things were of no account to him just then, in his state of mind, with that nightmare of unrest entering his soul and making him its prey.

"A foolish life that I am leading now," he thought. "Absolutely foolish!"

And just by the theatre he met with Mela, face to face. It was after the performance; she was walking with Rose, and their coach followed them. He bowed rather carelessly, and was about to pass them.

"Won't you see us home?"

"I did not wish to intrude."

"Come in to tea; Bernard is sure to be waiting for us."

He walked on in silence, having no mind to speak.

"What's wrong with you, Vysocki?"

"Nothing but my usual nervous irritability, and a painful sense of lethargy besides."

"But has anything unpleasant happened to you?"

"No. But I am expecting some bad news, and when I have such forebodings, they always are realized."

"I," Mela said, "am just like you; but I was ashamed to say so."

"I have been among the very poor to-day, and have drunk so deeply of so many aspects of human wretchedness—that I have taken more of it than was good for me." A nervous shudder shook him all over at the remembrance.

"Compassion," Rose observed, "is the illness you suffer from; Bernard always says so."

"Bernard!" Vysocki raised his voice. "His complaint is a delirium that leads him to belittle all things; and he is so blind that he wants to persuade people that there is nothing to see, because he sees nothing!"

"And who are those 'very poor'?" Mela asked. "Can one assist them?"

He told her of the position of the Yaskulskis, and of several other families.

She listened with sympathy, and took mental note of their addresses. "Oh, why are men doomed to make each other suffer so?" she cried.

"And now, Mela, let me ask what the matter is with you. You seem ready to break down."

"Do not ask! Do not so much as wish to know!" She bowed her head and looked down.

He asked no more questions, but glanced at her face and fell into a brown study.

Before them stretched the silent, deserted street, with its dotted rows of lamps, and its long lines of houses, like petrified giants' heads, one following the other, the window-panes seeming to move in the yellowish light of the street lamps—a scene in some ghastly horrible dream.

"What can have come over her?" he wondered, casting wistful glances towards her, and becoming conscious that her sadness was beginning to make him sad as well.

"I suppose you have not enjoyed yourselves much at the play."

"Quite the contrary.—But oh, the tremendous power of love!" Rose answered, and went on to explain the reason of her exclamation. "How much poor Sapho had to endure! I have still present all those cries of hers, all those entreaties, all her torments: they are before my mind. Such love as hers frightens me, dismays me—I cannot understand her, and I doubt even whether it is possible to feel so much—to give oneself over to love so completely, to be so swallowed up by it—drowned in it!"

"Yet it is—it is possible," Mela returned, raising her eyes.

"Come round to my side, Vysocki, and give me your hand," said Rose.

He did, and she took that thin, nervous hand, pressing it to her forehead and to her burning cheeks.

"Do you not feel that I am in a fever?"

"Yes, and the fever is high. But why do you go, then, to so nerve-shattering a drama?"

"And what else on earth would you have me do?" she cried in a voice of pain, opening her eyes wide as she looked him in the face. "Can you advise me how to get away from the weariness I feel? No. By now I am tired of all our at-homes, fed up with drives about town, weary of travelling abroad and living that hotel life that I cannot bear. Well, the stage still interests me from time to time. Yes, it strikes upon the nerves, plays upon the heart—stings—and I love to be so roused and moved to the very deepest depths of me!"

Here he broke in, not having listened to her. "What ails Mela?" he queried.

"You shall be told this instant."

"No, no, no!" cried Mela, who had heard both question and reply.

They had now come to the brilliantly lighted vestibule of Mendelsohn's palace.

"Is Mr. Endelman in?" she inquired of the footman in waiting, to whom she handed her hat and cloak.

"He is in the trophy room, and begs you to join him there."

"Let us go there; it is warmer than in my boudoir; warmer, too, than in any of the other rooms," Rose said, as they traversed a suite of apartments, dim in the feeble flickering of a six-branched chandelier, which the footman held up as he led the way.

The "trophy room" belonged to Stanislas Mendelsohn, Shaya's youngest son. Its name came from its carpet of tigers' skins, and door-hangings of the same; the furniture was of buffalo-horns and covered with their hides dressed with

the long ashen-coloured hair on. Numerous weapons, hanging on the wall, formed a ring round a huge elk-head, with flat, wide-spreading antlers.

"I have been waiting for a whole hour," said Bernard, who did not so much as rise at their entrance, but remained sitting under the elk's head, taking his tea.

"Why did you not come to the theatre and fetch us home?"

"Because I never go to see puppet-shows, and you know it.—They are all right for you, though."

"You are posing," Rose retorted flippantly.

The footman brought in the tea.

There was a heavy, tedious silence in the room. The only sounds heard were the frequent striking of a match—for Bernard was continually lighting fresh cigarettes—or the dull impact of billiard-balls in the next room.

"Who is playing?"

"Stanislas and Kessler."

"Have you seen them?"

"They bored me very soon, and beat me at play still sooner. But now, at last, we may possibly have a little conversation."

No one, however, cared to set the example. Mela, plunged in unpleasant thought, looked at Rose sorrowfully, and at times wiped her eyes.

"Truly, Mela, you are quite plain to-night. A weeping woman is like a wet umbrella, always dripping, whether open or shut. I can't bear women's tears; they are either untrue or silly. Dust in the eyes or a waterspout on the slightest provocation!"

"Let us alone, Bernard; just now even your comparisons come in at one ear and pass out at the other."

"Oh, let him talk; it's his strong point."

"Well, you too, Rose, are looking rather seedy. You seem as if someone in the vestibule had been kissing and hugging you very hard, and the delightful business had been interrupted at the most interesting moment."

"You are not in perfect form to-night by any means."

"That's no concern of mine."

"Then why do you talk such nonsense?"

"Because you all are sending me off to sleep. You, Vysocki, look like a tallow candle set on the table of a sabbath, with a snuff so long as to blacken the charms of the Shulamite herself!"

"I do not feel so satisfied with the world as you do."

"How right you are! I do feel extremely satisfied," Bernard said, laughing nervously, and lighting another cigarette.

"Another of your poses!" Rose exclaimed, losing patience.

"Rose!" Bernard exclaimed with a sudden outburst, as if she had lashed him across the face. "Either pocket all I say, or never see me here again!"

"Why do you fly out so? I did not mean to offend you."

"It's the silly nonsensical names you give me that make me fly out. You define me as one who poses; yet you do not know me in the least. And what can you know of me—of my life? What can girls know of a man? girls who have not yet left the sphere of childish frippery, of childish boredom? Nothing, nothing absolutely but this: how he is dressed, how his hair and his eyes look, whom he is in love with—and whether he dances well; these things and things like these. Of me you know only the outward man, and you think to define me for what I am!—You say of me: 'It's his nature to pose.' And why? Because now and then I let off a paradox about the futility of life—of work—of money. Now, if Vysocki had let it off, you would have listened to him, for he has no money, and must work hard; but because I despise all that, I am a man who poses! How indeed could a girl understand that I mean what I say, if I am a rich man and hold shares in the factory of Kessler and Endelman? And just as reasonably you call Müller a merry-andrew. You never see him but when he turns somersaults here, or tells funny anecdotes or tales of love adventures. Yet, funny though he is, still, behind Müller the funny man there hides another Müller—who thinks, who observes, who draws inferences. Oh, of course neither he nor I would come to you

with our inferences, our internal ego; we would never tell you of what oppresses or wounds or enraptures us; that's not what you want. You are weary and want us to amuse you. Very well, then, we become merry-andrews for your mockery to seize upon; but only because we choose for a time to play the fool and cut somersaults and entertain the young geese of Lodz, who otherwise would feel bored. You look on us as upon a piece of goods for sale, valuing it as you value us, to the extent to which it may suit your fancy!—But after all, whoever speaks sensibly to a woman pours water into a sieve."

"Silly we may be perhaps, but you are surely conceited," said Rose; and Mela added:

"If we do not see what you blame us for not seeing, it is your own fault—the fault of you all—you treat us like children."

"Because children you are, and children you will remain eternally!" With which caustic words, Bernard rose.

"If so," Rose argued, "why do you blame us for not acting as grown-ups?"

"I may have hurt your feelings. If I have, I can but leave you. So good-night!" And he walked towards the door.

"Stay, Bernard, stay! I beg you!" Rose cried, starting up and standing in his way.

He went out, but only to another room, where he sat down to play the piano.

Rose, extremely indignant at what she had heard, walked about the room. Vysocki remained mute. He judged Bernard's speech to be mere sounding words, of which he had not so much as endeavoured to catch the meaning. He only kept his eyes fixed on Mela, who, bending forward over the table, gazed into empty space.

"Sit down by my side," she said to him, feeling that his eyes were so earnestly fixed on her.

He came and bent over her, asking: "What is it then that pains you so?" His soft, gentle voice caused within her a strangely sweet feeling of delight, that made her cheeks flush red as fire.

Nevertheless she said no word; her voice had failed her. Besides, after that one instant of rapture, such a wave of misery came over her that her grey eyes brimmed with tears. His hand lay on the table; she bent down till her cheek touched it. Then those tears which she had long kept back came pouring down upon it in a shower, running over it in a warm stream.

Her tears touched him to the quick. With an instinctive movement he caressed her soft hair, and whispered incoherent affectionate words in a voice that trembled with tender sympathy.

She moved her head closer and closer to him; every touch of his hand electrified and penetrated her with indescribable sweetness. A wild longing seized her—to lay her head on his breast, to throw her arms round his neck, and, thus holding him embraced, to tell him of the misery that had come to overwhelm her. Her soul, sensitive in the extreme, was hungering for caresses, as it was hungering for love which she was afraid at that moment to reveal to him by reason of the feminine instinct of modest passivity that held her back. But her weeping was so restrained and subdued that nothing betrayed the state of her feelings, except her flowing tears and the trembling which she was unable to control.

She beheld him through the mist of her tears—those tears which made his soul yearn towards her so mightily, and aroused in him such powerful emotions that he feared he should yield to the temptation of kissing her tremulous, burning lips. For what he felt was not love, even at that moment; it was but the outcome of his intense compassion for all suffering. Nay, in all he saw, he saw no sign of her love for him: friendship only he saw, because he desired hers.

Bernard went on playing with increasing force and fury. He smote on the piano, and the wild strains of a turbulent scherzo came forth, filling the empty rooms as with throbbing peals of fierce sardonic laughter, that seemed rolling along the carpet in rhythmical waves.

Rose was meantime pacing the whole suite of rooms from end to end and back, paying heed to nothing: now emerging

from the shadows, now flitting through the "trophy room," then disappearing beyond, to reappear presently; always with that ponderous swinging motion of the hips, that was nearly a halt.

She pretended to be plunged in thought; in reality she wanted to give Mela and Vysocki an opportunity to arrive at an understanding, and was vexed to see that they both sat motionless and speechless. She wished to see them rush into each other's arms with a cry of love upon their lips—to behold them devour each other with kisses. She had in imagination prepared the whole scene beforehand; and now, greedily desirous to witness it, every now and then she faced about, in order to catch them in the very act of a fond embrace.

"He's a hopeless case!" she thought in resentful disappointment, and, stopping in the dark doorway, carefully noted his features and bearing.

"As loving as an oyster!" she hissed scornfully. Then she turned to Bernard, who had done playing.

"One o'clock!—Good-night, Rose: I must be going home."

"We may go together, if you like; I shall take you, my carriage is in waiting," Mela said, turning to Vysocki, who was buttoning and unbuttoning his coat, like a man half asleep.

"Very well."

"Mela!" said Rose on taking leave of her, "don't forget that Mrs. Endelman's birthday is on Saturday."

"To-day my sister-in-law begged me to remind you that you are anxiously expected."

"I got the invitation yesterday, but doubt if I shall go."

"You really must. You will see lots of odd people, and we two will make fun of my sister-in-law. They are arranging a surprise for the visitors—a concert, a new picture—and the mysterious Travinska is to be there."

"Then I shall go with you. She is something worth seeing."

Vysocki saw Mela to her carriage.

"Why, are you not getting in?" she asked in wonderment, seeing him shake hands with her.

"I am afraid not, Miss Mela; I must walk a little. My nerves are terribly unstrung," he pleaded, not quite frankly.

"In that case, Doctor Vysocki, I wish you good-night," she replied stiffly, hurt by his refusal.

He did not notice her attitude, but kissed her hand. She at once regretted her change of demeanour, and turned a friendly face to him from her carriage.

"Let's go to some tavern," Bernard said to him.

"Thanks, no; I am in no mood for that to-night."

"Then to the Château."

"No, I am going straight home; my mother is expecting me."

"I don't like to hear you talk so. Since some time you have been very singular, and look like a man infected by the bacillus of love!"

"On my word of honour, I am not in love."

"You are, but don't know you are as yet."

"And with whom, pray?"

"With Mela."

Vysocki laughed, but his laughter did not ring quite true. "You have made a big mistake."

"I never make mistakes in such cases."

"Well, and if I were in love, why do you speak to me about it?" he asked in no very good humour.

"I think it is a pity for you to be in love with a Jewess."

"Again, why?"

"Jewesses are all right to flirt with, Polish girls to make love to, and German women to start a breeding-establishment. But for you to take a Jewess to wife—never. Better drown yourself."

Vysocki stopped short. "Since we are in for plain speaking, let us speak plainly.—Am I in your way at all?"

"Not in the least, I assure you. The idea!" he answered, with a rasping laugh. "I have warned you in a friendly way. Between you there are such great race-differences that not even the most intense love can sweep them away. Do no violence to your race; do not marry any Jewess.—And so, farewell!"

He got into a cab and drove home, while Vysocki once again set to walking up Piotrovska Street, as he had done two hours since; but now he walked on quickly and in a far different mood. What Bernard had said gave him much matter for thought, and he tried to analyse the feeling which Mela had aroused in him.

CHAPTER XI



ELA meanwhile, locked up in her room, was in deep meditation concerning herself. She lay in bed, her eyes open, and listened to the silent night, and to the voices that were now beginning to be heard within her: voices of protest against her father's intention; in the course of the day he had, not without insistence, laid a proposal of marriage before her. This was, plainly put, a mere commercial arrangement with the great firm Wolfish & Landau, of Sosnoviec, who had a son and heir that they wished to marry to the daughter of the firm Grüns-pan & Lansberger.

On both sides the affair promised to be a good stroke of business.

Young Leopold Landau was willing. He did not care a fig whom he married, not he! provided the girl had a marriage portion in ready money—and enough of it. He meant to start a business on his own, and required cash; and since Mela had the dowry he wanted, and besides, as he liked her photograph very much (the matchmakers had procured it for him in secret), he had no objection to marrying her at once. Whether she loved him or not, was a clever girl or a fool, healthy or sickly, sweet-tempered or shrewish—that was all the same to him, as he remarked to the go-betweens.

And he had come to Lodz that very day, to have a look at his intended. He liked Papa exceedingly. Mela dazzled him; the factory gave him the impression of a splendidly going concern. Not that he said anything to that effect to old Grüns-pan. Quite the contrary. He beheld it uninterestedly, and even made a wry face at some kerchiefs ready for sale.

"Lodz make!" he said with a wink.

"Don't be an ass; they sell splendidly!" Grünspan flared up.

Leopold was far from taking amiss the old man's extreme simplicity of language—in business one never takes such things amiss—he only slapped him on the back, and they both went in to dinner in perfect harmony.

During the whole meal Mela was in tortures. She listened to Landau's compliments (of Sosnoviec make) in sheer disgust, and as soon as ever she could, had gone out to take refuge with her friend Rose.

"I have gained half a day so, but what will become of me to-morrow—and after?" So she thought, as she lay in the dark, watching the blinds, through which the moon shed a greenish light, with motes dancing in its bright beams, above the gay-coloured carpet and the dark-hued majolica stove. "But they shall not force my will—no, that they shall not!" she added, recalling with strong abhorrence young Leopold and his squirrel-like face, while the remembrance of that husky, raucous voice and that slobbering, thick-lipped mouth, like a Negro's, simply filled her with physical loathing.

She shut her eyes and buried her face in her pillow, to get rid of the impression of nausea she had. She felt a nervous shrinking at the recollection of the cold moisture on his hands, and could not help wiping her own on the sheet, and looking them over a long time by the light of the moon, as though she feared his touch had left some filthy mark behind it.

She knew she loved Vysocki with all her heart and soul, and with him all the people with whom she had been brought up in Warsaw—people not in the least like those around her. She knew that she would never marry Leopold, that she would resist any pressure her father and family might bring to bear. Into that resolve she put all her energy—and then she thought no more of anyone but Vysocki, not even troubling whether he cared for her; she loved him herself too dearly to notice, or even to think that he might not be in love.

That day, at the Mendelsohns', she had not told him her

trouble. He himself was so unstrung, so grieved! Besides, she felt a fear in his presence, like that of a child, too bashful to complain in presence of its elders. She had been pained by that refusal of his to drive home with her; but he had gripped her hand so fast—and he had kissed it! The memory thrilled her even now.

She lay motionless for several hours, calling to mind both the evening just gone by, and the whole period of their acquaintance. She drew herself up and pressed her head hard down upon the pillow, remembering the touch of his hand as he stroked her hair; and she throbbed at the memory with a sweet, enervating enjoyment.

Then, as the grey dawn came, bringing more light to the room, and outlining more clearly all the upholstery and furniture, she set to thinking of doctors whom she knew well, and of their worldly success. There were two fellow students of hers who were married to doctors, and who received company in a style not more limited than did many a manufacturer. This eased her mind completely; and, filled with the thought that she too might, like them, keep house and have all the intelligentsia of Lodz to her at-homes, she fell asleep.

It was rather late in the morning when she awoke, with a severe headache. When she entered the dining-room, the whole family were there, seated at lunch. She fed her old grandmother first of all, and then sat down to table, paying no heed to Sigismund, who talked very loud about something.

According to his wont, Grünspan paced the room, with a saucer full of tea that he raised with both hands to his mouth. He was arrayed in a cherry-coloured velvet dressing-gown, embroidered with gold on the sleeves and collar. A small cap, also of velvet and embroidered likewise, covered the crown of his head. He was in great good humour, drank his tea very audibly, and briefly answered Sigismund's queries in the intervals. The latter, having to start for Warsaw, was lunching in a hurry.

The old aunt who kept house for the family was busy

packing his valise. "Sigismund, shall I put in any clean linen? Do you want clean linen?"

"All right," he replied. "Father, I tell you it is no good waiting. Albert Grosman should depart at once; he is seriously ill. You and Regina will see to the business."

"What is the matter with Albert?" Mela inquired; since the fire she no longer had any liking for him.

"Something out of order with his heart. That fire upset him terribly."

"Yes, it was a big fire; I myself was frightened," said Grünspan, and, reaching out his saucer for Mela to fill it, he only then perceived her grey, swollen face, with a dark ring under each eye. "Why so pale to-day; are you unwell? Our doctor will be coming presently to visit a workman in his home; we will bring him to see you."

"No, I am well, but I could not sleep at all."

"Oh, I know why you couldn't, Mela dear," he shouted in great glee, patting her cheeks fondly. "You could not but think of *him*.—Yes, I understand."

"Of whom?" she snapped.

"Of your future husband. He sends you his best love, and is coming round in the afternoon."

"I have no future husband; and if he comes, Sigismund may receive him for me."

"Father! do you hear what that goose is saying?" Sigismund cried with a scowl.

"Bah, Sigismund! all girls talk so before the wedding."

"What is the name of that—gentleman?" she asked, struck with a new idea.

"She has forgotten, has she? What's this new trick of hers?"

"Sigismund, I am not speaking to you, so you will please to let me absolutely alone!"

"But I am speaking to you, and you shall listen!" he roared, unbuttoning his uniform, as was always his custom when he was excited or displeased.

"Now don't, children!—Mela, I tell you his name is Leopold Landau, from Chenstohova; what other name could you

wish him to have? They have works at Sosnoviec, and the firm is Wolfish and Landau: a solid firm; the very name has weight."

"But none for me!" she replied resolutely.

Upon which old Grünspan proceeded to dress himself with the help of Francis, the footman. He had a private room of his own, and most magnificently appointed, but had never got used to it; he always preferred a dirty room to a clean one, and a crowded place to solitude. Mela said no more, while her aunt—an old woman in a red wig, with a parting of white thread down the middle, shrivelled, sallow, crooked, with sunken cheeks, a dusty-looking face, and drooping eyelids, out of which bleared eyes peered forth—went about the room, putting back into the sideboard the glasses and plates that she had immediately after breakfast washed in a large basin.

"Francis," she croaked, gathering up some crusts of bread and gnawed bones from the oilcloth on the table, "take these to your little ones."

"They'll do for dogs, not for my children!" he answered back haughtily and without the least respect for her.

"You are a stupid lout; they would make good soup."

"Then give them to the cook, and feed on the soup yourself."

"Peace, Francis; your tongue runs too fast. Give me some water in the basin," interjected Grünspan senior.

He was pretty nearly dressed, yet set about washing, dabbing his face with water very daintily, but with a loud intake of breath at each dab.

"Well, Mela, what have you to say against Leopold Landau?"

"Nothing; I do not know the man, and have seen him for the first time in my life."

"That's quite enough. If we conclude the affair, you'll have plenty of time to know each other better."

"Father, I tell you decidedly, and once for all, I will not marry him."

"You! what are you looking on here for, like a fly drown-

ing in milk!" he roared at Francis, who vanished at once, together with the aunt. The old man finished his ablutions, combed his hair, put on a handsome collar over a somewhat dirty shirt, tied his large cravat, which concealed the shirt very well, put his brush and comb into his pocket with his watch, surveyed his beard in the looking-glass, thrust certain long, white strings under his waistcoat, put on hat and overcoat, and lastly said, with his umbrella under his arm, putting on his warm winter gloves: "And why won't you marry him?"

"Because I do not love him. I loathe him; and besides——"

"Ha ha! my dear Mela has some little bees in her bonnet, I see."

"However that may be, I am not going to marry him," she returned with great firmness.

"Mela, I say nothing, for I am a most indulgent father. I might have commanded you, arranged everything without bringing you in at all. But I do not; why? Because I love you, Mela, and would give you time to think the matter over. Yes, you are a sensible girl, and will not want to prevent such excellent business; you'll think it over. Why, Mela, you will be the foremost person in all Sosnoviec. This I will point out to you clearly——"

But Mela would hear no more; she pushed her chair back abruptly and fled from the room.

"Those women always have some moonstruck fancies in their brains!" he growled. But he was put out neither by her refusal, nor by her flight from the room. He just finished his tea and went out to town.

For several days there was no word at all of marriage. Landau had gone, and Mela spent nearly the whole of her time with Rose, so as to see as little as possible of her father. He, at their infrequent meetings, would smile benignantly, pat her cheek, and ask: "Mela, do you still refuse Leopold Landau?" Usually she did not answer at all; but all this made her despondent and nervous to the utmost, having no idea what to do, nor what the end of it all would be. Now she began to wonder anxiously whether Vysocki

really cared for her. The doubt pierced her, sharp as a needle, and the repeated smart of the dark, tormenting doubt continued ever to increase. There were moments when, in spite of her by no means strengthless pride, she might have openly confessed her love to him, if only that he might tell her of his own. But Vysocki did not appear at her friend's any more, and she only once saw him—in the street, giving his arm to his mother. He bowed to Mela, and must have told his mother who she was, for she saw the latter's searching gaze fixed upon her.

One day she visited the Endelmans' house with Rose, but only in hope to meet Vysocki there; a faint hope indeed, for she did not know if he ever came to their house. They drove slowly through the town, it being a fine day; the streets were almost bare of mud, and full of people out for a walk, and of working-men in their holiday clothes, for that Saturday was a great Church festival. Shaya, who had come with them, was sitting on the front seat, with his legs carefully wrapped up in a plaid.

"Rose," he said, "I have a mind to travel; but guess where to? If you do, I'll take you along with me."

Chancing to look up at the sky of azure overhead, she answered at random: "To Italy!"

"Right! And we shall be able to start in a few days."

"I'll go with you, but only provided you take Mela with us as well."

"Let her come, it will be more pleasant on the way."

"Thanks, dear Rose; but you know I cannot. Father would never consent."

"What? not consent? If I am for it, who is Grünspan to be against it? I shall see him about it to-morrow, and next Saturday we shall smell the scent of orange-blossoms."

Rose knew Italy. She had been there with her father and with her sister-in-law; but she desired now to go to show the country to her friend. Shaya Mendelsohn knew it also, but not properly. When all Poland was covered with frost and snow, he often felt a capricious irresistible longing for sunshine and warmth; and it overcame him so that he would

have his trunks quickly packed, and, taking someone as a companion, go off by express train, stopping nowhere, to Italy, Nice, or Spain. But a fortnight later he would be home again. He could not live away from that town, *his* town; he missed those hours of bliss that he had to spend daily in his office, missed the clatter of the machines, the furious activity, the intense life of his factories—in short, he wanted Lodz, and had scarcely lost sight of it when he came back to it again with fond desire. Lodz attracted the man, just as a strong magnet will draw iron filings to itself.

"But, Papa! I am not coming home as soon as you!"

"That's all right; I am weary of Lodz by now; I too shall make a longer stay."

They came to a two-storeyed house, imitating (not too badly) a heavily built old Florentine palace. It stood in a garden off one of the side streets, which was railed off from it by an ivy-grown iron grating, at the top of which shone sharp gilt iron spikes, and blue majolica vases placed on pillars and rosy with flowering azaleas, that had been put there on purpose to honour that day's solemnity in the house of Endelman. The factory of the joint-stock company of the firm Kessler & Endelman closed one side of the garden, with its towering red wall, whose innumerable windows were glittering in the sun.

The coachman drove round a bed of flowers and shrubs, brought there from the greenhouse, and pulled up under a portico, supported on columns, the ivy-twined pillars of which sustained a terrace surrounded by a balustrade of wood, painted to imitate marble.

From a long vestibule, spread with a crimson carpet, in the midst of which there stood a great cluster of rhododendrons in full flower, they ascended to the first floor up a wide flight of stairs, spread with a crimson carpet and decorated with a double row of white azaleas that, like two long streaks of snow, stood out in strong relief against the walls, lined with dark-red damask. Both vestibule and stairs were flooded with electric light, reflected from the large mirrors in the antechamber.

Several lackeys, in black liveries and gold-laced coats, divested the new-comers of their cloaks.

"Really, it is very fine here!" Mela whispered, going upstairs with Rose.

"Fine indeed!" Shaya returned disdainfully. He plucked a few flowers carelessly, flung them on to the carpet and trampled them underfoot.

Endelman came to welcome them solemnly in the doorway, and ushered them with great ceremony into the drawing-room. "It is, Mr. President, most kind of you to have come. What, Mr. President?" He listened with his head on one side for the answer, being slightly deaf.

"I wanted to have a look at you, Endelman.—Well, how goes it, old boy?" And he clapped him on the shoulder with great familiarity.

"Thanks awfully. I am well, and so is my wife, what?"

The noisy talk in the drawing-room died away when they came in. About fifteen people rose to greet the "cotton king," who, attired in a long black capote and wearing high patent-leather boots, contrasted strikingly with the evening dress of the other guests. He walked through the drawing-room with a gracious smile, shook hands with some, patted others on the back, nodded to the womenfolk, and surveyed the room superciliously, with half-closed eyelids. Kessler junior wheeled an arm-chair round to him, into which he dropped heavily, and was immediately surrounded by a circle of visitors.

"Fatigued, Mr. President? Have a glass of champagne; first-rate brand, what?"

"Yes, I think I will," he declared, wiping his spectacles with a coloured pocket-handkerchief, and, after putting them on, proceeded to reply to the many questions asked.

"How is your health, Mr. President?"

"Is your appetite restored, sir?"

"When are you going to a watering-place?"

"You are looking in good condition, sir!"

"And for what reason should I look poorly?" he responded smiling, but a little bored and scornful, listening to the continued chorus of voices, and turning his eyes to where Rose

stood surrounded by a group of women in gay dresses.

A confused din of voices, rather too noisy, rose in the adjoining room, where a buffet had been fixed up; and also from a large bevy of women seated in the centre of the drawing-room.

Presently Endelman came in, preceded by a footman bearing a glass, and a bottle of champagne in an ice-pail on a silver tray. Endelman himself snipped the wires, and, when the cork flew out, poured out the frothing liquor and offered it to Shaya with his own hands.

Mendelsohn sipped the wine slowly, tasting it like a connoisseur. "Not bad, Endelman. Much obliged."

"I should think so: eleven roubles a bottle!"

A goodly number of chairs, low stools, and cosy arm-chairs formed a circle in the centre of which Shaya was seated like a monarch amidst his courtiers and vassals. He unbuttoned his coat, and the long tails floated on to the floor, and his black satin waistcoat was seen, from which peeped out the two white strings that the orthodox Jews wear. He crossed his legs so high in the air that one foot came to the level of the heads of those who sat near and inclined them at every word he uttered; and whenever he opened his mouth, they would stop short in mid-sentence. All eyes were solemnly fixed on his great dark orbs, flashing bright under red eyelids, and upon every motion of his thin parchment-like hand, with its blunt finger-tips and bitten finger-nails, as it stroked his white beard and close-clipped white hair, through which his pinkish scalp was to be seen. His face was of a light saffron tint, thin and restless, extremely so; his nose hooked and (his front teeth having gone) so long that it hung over his mouth.

He spoke very slowly, articulating every word and puckering his white, protuberant forehead, wrinkled in thick folds, with deeply sunken temples.

All the poverty-stricken 'one-million men,' and the wretched men who had only hundreds of thousands, bent low in homage to his many millions; Jews, Germans, and Poles formed an harmonious circle of good feeling round the man.

In the presence of that mighty one whose power bore them all down and hypnotized even the least sensitive, race-antagonisms vanished, rivalries and hatreds disappeared; nay, even personal feuds. "Before the pike they all were gudgeons, and waited anxiously for him to swallow them up, when it should please him so to do"; so David Halpern used to describe the attitude of the lesser manufacturers towards Shaya. But Shaya was in a good humour that day, said not a word about business, and even vouchsafed to jest with some of the men.

"Kipman, have you a roll of percale under your clothes? Your belly looks as if you had."

"Why should I have a roll of percale there? I'm not well, and have to go to Karlsbad very soon."

Thus did the Lodz millionaires confabulate together, and the drawing-room grew more and more lively as fresh visitors poured in.

Mrs. Endelman did the honours of the house with great *savoir vivre* and dignity of mien. Her husband seconded her most efficiently; his piercing voice was heard every now and then, crying: "What?"

The rustle of silks, the babble of talk, the scents of flowers and perfumes, were slowly filling that immense *salon*, one of the finest in all Lodz. The company were constantly breaking up into separate groups, which by no means sufficed to crowd the great drawing-room and the adjoining rooms, with quantities of furniture scattered about.

The main *salon* took up the whole of one corner of the house, with windows looking out on both the gardens and the upstanding windows of the factories beyond them. There were yellow silk blinds that kept out the sun and shed a golden twilight all round. In this rich glimmer were seen the picture-frames, indistinctly outlined on the walls, the bronze ornaments of the furniture, and of the bright-hued silk hangings, with branches portrayed upon them in pale green, and flowers of the most exquisite draughtsmanship; the pallid verdure of the hangings, sprinkled with embroidered flowers, seemed to frame the walls they surrounded and form a lovely

setting for the ceiling above. This, like a veil withdrawn, seemed to open upon an admirable painting, with scenes *à la* Watteau—a meadow, interspersed with trees; a rivulet that meandered in silvery windings over green and flowery lawns, on which lambs were grazing, with blue ribbons tied round their snow-white necks; and a troop of shepherds in eighteenth-century wigs and shepherdesses in short costumes, dancing quadrilles to the sounds of a pipe, played by a faun with auburn hair.

In the drawing-room itself, a graceful Diana of Fontainebleau appeared in bronze, surrounded with white and purple roses that climbed with a gentle forward bend over the marble pedestal, and up to the greenish grey of the statue, which they besprinkled with lively colours. It was in front of this statue that Mendelsohn sat with the manufacturers of Lodz at his feet.

Several sets of furniture in the purest Louis XIV style—white and gold, with painted or enamelled ornaments in tints of white and green—stood close to the walls, beneath groups of paintings, most of which were of great value. The Endelmans possessed quite a gallery of pictures, which they had collected with enthusiasms rather than with the solid judgment of connoisseurs. Besides these sets of furniture, there were more in other styles: plenty of stands, variously inlaid and encrusted, of arm-chairs from China—gilded bamboos upholstered with gaudy silks, gilded flower-stands, filled with flowers. And in an open fire-place, with a very tasteful chimney-piece, there was a great blazing fire, which threw a light alternately golden and blood-red upon several young ladies. Amongst these Rose was sitting, when Mrs. Endelman, superb in her dark cherry-red velvet gown, embellished (according to the then prevailing fashion) with imitations of precious stones all over her very full corsage, came up to her.

“If you are not enjoying yourselves, I’ll send you Bernard.”

“Have you anybody still more entertaining?”

“Has he bored you already?”

"Oh, he'll do for daily use, but for to-day's solemnity I should enjoy a change."

"Then I'll bring you Kessler or Boroviecki."

"What? Is Mr. Boroviecki here too!" she ejaculated with lively interest; for she had perceived Mrs. Likiert there not a minute since.

"All Lodz is here," Mrs. Endelman answered with great complacency. Her closed lips opened to smile, and she passed on with majestic steps, her head surrounded with a halo of well-curled iron-grey hair, fixed with diamond pins. Her large, broad face, set off with a thin, clear-cut nose and tiny black eyes, deeply shaded about the lids, beamed with pride.

At the buffet that had been set up in one of the side apartments a good number of men were standing about, among whom were Boroviecki, Travinski, and Müller senior, redder in the face than usual. He talked loud and spat on the floor contemptuously, in mockery of the Jews, and provoked by the sumptuousness of the Endelmans' establishment and the lordly attitudes they struck. Boroviecki twirled his moustache and smiled faintly; Travinski was contemplating his wife, who for the first time appeared at Lodz in so large an assembly. She was sitting amid a number of other ladies, all of whom she eclipsed by her high-born charm, and by her dress—a perfection of elegant simplicity. She must have been but little interested in the frivolous chatter of the others, for she replied in few words, and feasted her eyes on the paintings and works of art scattered about the drawing-room. The profusion of silks, of laces, of velvets, and their jewel adornments, glittering with every colour of the rainbow, above which the ladies' heads rose as in a gorgeous setting, framed her own figure marvellously, and brought out to the very best effect her own white gown, buttoned up to the throat, and girt about the waist with a golden belt.

"Who is that enchanting woman?" Grosplik made inquiry.

"She is my wife, my dear sir."

"Ah, how I congratulate you! She's not a woman, she's an angel, and four times over!" the banker cried out enthusias-

tically, and insisted on Travinski's introducing him to her.

"You, Mr. Boroviecki, are possibly unacquainted with some of the ladies here?" Bernard remarked.

"With a great many; but will you kindly introduce me?"

"That is my special function to-day."

He went arm in arm with Charles round the room, where a long-haired *maestro* was striking a few preliminary notes on the piano which had been carried in out of one of the smaller rooms.

"What! is there to be music as well?"

"Ask me rather what there is not to be; I could answer more easily. Is this your first appearance at a reception of my sister-in-law's?"

"Yes, I somehow was never able to come till now."

"I'm sorry for you."

"Because I never came before?"

"Yes. You would have been bored already, and now you are about to be," Bernard replied flippantly.

"Oh, surely not."

"Now, attention! We're to begin (a round million!)," he whispered, introducing him to Mada Müller.

"Ah, but we are well acquainted!" Miss Müller cried, much pleased, and stretching out her hand.

"Well, say something nice to each other. I am coming back for you presently."

"Something nice? That I have heard this minute," said Boroviecki, standing beside her.

"Does it count at all?" Mada said artlessly.

"It does, and I shall remember it well."

"Oh, how very kind you are!" she exclaimed, and hid her face in her fan.

He eyed her intently, and she felt herself blushing from head to foot. She looked very pretty just then in her pink silk dress, trimmed with white lilies of the valley. Her yellow hair, dressed in Greek style, flowed down to her milk-white throat, dusted, as it were, with golden freckles that took a deeper hue when she blushed; and her eyelashes (golden rings round her china-blue eyes) drooped over

them bashfully, for she did not venture to look at him.

But Bernard was back again. Charles bowed, and they left her wistfully looking where he went, but not daring to ask him to return.

On introducing him to a plain girl, so very freckled she was almost brown, and whose head and face and thin throat were abundantly powdered and bediamonded, Bernard whispered again: "Whether her teeth are her own, I can't say; the diamonds are undoubtedly hers."

"As a cicerone, you are unrivalled."

"I have a reputation as such. Now I'll show you a ruin. Only fifty thousand in cash, but if her father gets burnt out again—which may easily happen—her dowry will be twice doubled."

A pale girl, no longer young, and with an anæmic look about her, was smiling a feebly sorrowful smile, that showed her gums and a few teeth left in them.

Boroviecki bowed and passed on quickly; the girl's face, so very ghastly, made a painful impression upon him, like a stopped timepiece of old, cracked, dusty Saxony porcelain.

"A hundred thousand, and whims for double the amount; mind for three groschen only," he said before introducing him to Fela, a friend of Rose, who was eternally fluttering—tossing her hair about, darting her eyes about, moving feet and arms, mouth and eyebrows, and at times breaking into a merry childish laugh—and yet so charming, so pleasantly amusing, prattling in a voice so adorably naïve, that Boroviecki could not help saying:

"She's a delightful child!"

"She is; but under this delightful child there lurks a coming Messalina!"

Boroviecki had no time for protest: Rose was at hand.

"Rose Mendelsohn! How much? Her name tells you that by itself.—The other, the one in grey, is Mela Grünspan. Without stating the amount of her dowry I can't declare that she is the best and most intelligent girl in all Lodz," he said, and introduced Charles to the two friends, who looked at him with scrutinizing eyes.

"Too thin!" was Rose's verdict, given with such an air that Mela could not refrain from laughing.

Bernard introduced him to a score of women, young and old, giving him personal information respecting every one, and, his work done, set him free in the centre of the room. Taking up his station close to one of the walls, Charles viewed this assembly with keen interest. Opposite to him there was a doorway, hung with a green and gold *portière*, and opening on a boudoir in which sat Mrs. Likiert, with her eyes fixed on him. He did not notice her at the time, absorbed as he was by the bright-coloured groups he saw amid furniture, flowers, and greenery, sparkling with gems like a jeweller's shop-front; and by the black throngs of men in evening dress standing about on the background of those walls and of the women's splendid dresses—as a lot of ugly crabs would look crawling over a piece of tapestry. Several elderly ladies, almost bowed down under their laces, gold, and jewels, were sitting close to him, and speaking so loud that he withdrew to some distance.

"Tell me, is it not magnificent? could not a splendid painting be made from it?" Mrs. Endelman asked him, as she, passing by, caught him up in her wake.

"It is incomparable."

"Now I'm taking you to make somebody's acquaintance, but warn you first that she is very beautiful and very dangerous."

"The worse for me," he murmured, with so demure a bearing that Mrs. Endelman tapped him with her fan and laughed.

"You are a dangerous man."

"Quite so. Very harmful to myself," he answered very seriously, as he accompanied her to a tiny boudoir furnished in the Chinese style.

Presently he was making his bow to a celebrated Lodzian beauty, seated very much at her ease on a yellow Chinese sofa, with a cup of tea in her hand.

"You must forgive my audacity," she began, "if I confess that I have long been wishing to know you."

"Too great an honour, madam," he answered, with no little vexation, and casting a look towards the drawing-room, whence he wished someone might come to rescue him.

"But," she went on to say, "I have a grievance against you."

"Can it not possibly be forgotten?"

"No doubt, if you show proper signs of repentance."

"I do repent most sincerely, though I do not know of what."

"My grievance is that you have fascinated my husband."

"Has he complained I was a tedious companion?"

"On the contrary, he told me he had never yet spent his time so pleasantly."

"Then, madam, instead of complaining, you ought to feel grateful—and doubly so."

"Doubly so? How?"

"First because he has enjoyed himself; and then because he has not prevented your drives to the suburbs by staying at home," he said, stressing the last words; and, glancing keenly into her face, he saw her brows contract with alarm.

She laughed a laugh that rang false, and fingered the fine pearl necklace, set with diamonds, that adorned her marvelously well-shaped neck. In these movements the gloves which reached up to her shoulders slipped down for some distance, revealing the sculptural classic beauty of her arms; and her breath came so fast that her bosom, only half concealed, rose and fell tumultuously.

She was truly a very beautiful woman, but only with cold Greek beauty; her eyes, steel-grey and without lustre, like the panes in a frozen window, peered out under brows of a deep artificial black. For some time they thus crossed glances. At last she said under her breath: "Why has Lucy not come here?"

A shade of irony flickered in her eyes.

"I do not know, madam, because I don't know whom you mean," he answered, with perfect external calm.

"Mrs. Zuker."

"I was not aware that lady's name was Lucy."

"Is it long since you saw her last?"

"To answer your question I must first understand it."

"You don't understand? Don't you indeed?" she drawled, smiling and showing, behind her lips, that were shaped like a Cupid's bow, a row of exceedingly fine teeth.

"Is this a judicial inquiry?" he asked somewhat angrily, teased by her meaning looks and the intention to annoy him, plainly visible in her behaviour. She slightly knitted her brows and fixed her large Juno-like orbs upon him. She greatly resembled a statue of Juno.

"No, my dear sir, I am only asking about Lucy—our common, our intimate friend. For I love her not less than you do, though possibly not as you do," she added pleasantly.

"That Mrs. Zuker is worthy of love I must believe, since you say it."

"Worthy, too, of a love that is not ashamed of itself, Mr. Borowiecki. We are to one another like sisters, and do not conceal anything from each other."

"Well, then?" he asked, in a voice that was husky with exasperation. He bitterly resented Lucy's having betrayed their secret to that classical-faced doll.

"Then you ought to trust me and endeavour to gain my goodwill, which may often be of much use to you."

"Very well. And I begin directly."

He seated himself at once on the sofa and imprinted a kiss on her bare shoulder; for her dress was very low, and held up on either side only by a string of jewels.

"This is not the way to a faithful brotherly and sisterly friendship," she observed, drawing back with a slight smile.

"But such wonderful shoulders have nothing to do with friendship," he retorted; "nor has such exquisite beauty either."

"Neither have the lawless instincts of cave-men," she continued, rising and drawing herself up, wonderful in the shapely contours of her form. She then settled her artistically dressed blond hair, that had become somewhat disordered in the late bout, over her brows and temples, and (seeing that he also had risen) went on to say: "Do you stay here a little

longer, I beg. We have been here together just long enough for you to be suspected of making love to me."

"Would you resent such a thing, lady?"

"Would Lucy not resent it, Mr. Charles? And was I not right in calling you a cave-man?"

"A woman's man, rather."

"Well, I am at home on Thursdays. Pray come a little earlier than the others."

"Shall we meet again to-day?"

"No, I am leaving directly. At home I have a sick child whom I have left for your sake."

"I regret I am unable to express my gratitude as I should wish to do," he cried, with dancing eyes fixed upon her arms and neck.

She raised her fan, gave him a nod, and withdrew, smiling to conceal the embarrassment she felt.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" Bernard called to him. "Mrs. Travinska is asking for you. Ah, where has she gone, that director's wife, that handsome woman?"

"Gone forth to slay and ravage with her devastating eyes!" he laughed.

"A most tedious female!"

"Do you go to her at-homes?"

"What on earth should I do there? Only her past, present, or future votaries and lovers go.—Well, we are waiting for you."

Boroviecki felt so bored that he had no mind to meet Mrs. Travinska, but meant to slip out unobserved through a back way to the front door, and so take French leave. Passing, however, beneath the *portière* of the nearest boudoir, he came face to face with Mrs. Likiert, his former beloved one.

She drew back and turned round; but Charles, irresistibly drawn to her by the look in her eyes, followed her footsteps.

For a year's space they had not spoken to each other. They had fallen apart suddenly, and without a word of explanation. Sometimes they would meet at the play or in the street, and would bow from a distance, as if they hardly knew each

other. And yet her pale features not unfrequently came before his mind's eye, proud, sad, in bitter and reproachful silence.

He had several times thought of entering into conversation with her, but had not ventured. He knew he should be embarrassed as to what to say, for he did not love her any more. But now this unexpected meeting pierced him with the sharpest and most bewildering pain.

"It is long since I saw you last," she said quietly.

"Emma! Emma," he stammered, profoundly troubled as he looked into her pallid face.

"Please to come; the concert is about to begin," Mrs. Endelman said, darting a swift glance at them both.

At that moment the pianoforte accompaniment resounded, and the drawing-room vibrated to a clear melodious soprano voice, singing a sweet song. The din of voices subsided, and every eye was fixed upon the singer. But these two heard only the uneasy throbbing of their own hearts.

Emma, with a screen between her and the fire, sat down in a low chair, but the flame passed through in golden jets and reddened her face, white with tints of lilac, but very sorrowful—the face of a beautiful woman who is losing her youth. Borowiecki, standing by her side, looked down on her with half-closed eyes. Her face was still very fair, but marked by some ravages of time. On her sunken temples there lay a net as of tiny wrinkles that descended as far as to her eyes—those queenly eyes of hers, black upon the ground of their whites, pale bluish, like the eyes of a child; they shone with a sombre glitter, under her long, heavy lids, with their tracery of veins, dark blue and thin almost to invisibility. Beneath those eyes, too, were livid stains above the ivory whiteness of each cheek.

Her high and very beautiful forehead was uncovered: she had black hair, in which there gleamed a few silver threads. It was combed over her ears, where hung two very large diamonds. Her mouth was a deep purple, perfectly well shaped, but wearing a pained expression, and the corners drooped towards the strongly marked under jaw. Her face

and her slightly bent head expressed the fatigue which is the result of a long and distressing illness. Even that mouth, which alone had remained youthful, was like a fading pomegranate flower; and in all her face one could read that melancholy, almost bitter amiability of a woman who had cruelly suffered through love. Her delicate lineaments, which instantly reflected every feeling that passed through her heart and mind, were writhen with nervous tremors and responded even to the unconscious echoes of whatever impressed her.

Her dress was trimmed about the throat and bosom with dark yellow lace and strings of rubies and amethysts; and her figure was so supple and graceful that she might have been mistaken for a young girl.

She sat fanning herself gently without looking at him, though her quick glances took in the whole of the boudoir. She knew his eyes were on her, and that his burning gaze penetrated all the bitterness of her sorrowing heart, in which there glowed the embers of a strange and torturing fire. He was standing so near that she could hear him breathe, and his clothes rustled as he bent forward; she saw his fingers clutch at a flower-stand. She could lift her eyes and enjoy his sweet and so long expected presence; but she did not. She sat motionless.

He knew her to be of those who love but once, whose dreamers' souls, enamoured of an ideal life, are deaf and blind to the world's pettinesses, full of a passion that craves to be loved, and to give themselves eternally and altogether to the loved one; yet at the same time proud and full of the sense of their dignity. It was precisely that which had always most grated upon him. He preferred liaisons with ordinary women, under whose faultless exterior there beats a small feminine heart, given up to sex or domesticity. Such a person will never make a tragedy out of any transient amour; she will wind up with a burst of tears, an attack of insomnia, and another lover in the end. Or else she goes back to her temporarily interrupted household duties, and returns once again to what she was before—nothing.

"What can I say to her?" he asked himself once more.

"She sings most beautifully, doesn't she?" It was she who, without looking at him, had broken silence.

"Indeed she does," he answered hurriedly, following with his eyes the singer, who, at the end of her performance, was surrounded with men, and taken round to the refreshment room.

The piano was hushed, and the noise of talk rose louder than ever in the drawing-room. The lackeys were handing round ices, cakes, sweets, and champagne, bottles of which were every moment popping off.

"Have you started your new factory yet?"

"Not yet, but I hope to do so in autumn or about that time," he said in astonishment, expecting some very different sort of question.

Eyes met eyes at last, and they saw into the bottom of each other's souls. Emma was first to avert her gaze, for her eyes were dimmed with tears. She then said: "With all my heart do I wish you success. In all things—I hope you believe in my sincerity."

"More than in anyone else's."

"I am what I was at the beginning—I have not changed."

Her voice shook with infinite pain.

"Thanks," he replied, bowing his head.

"Then—farewell!" she added, rising; but the words were uttered in so stern a tone that he shuddered at them, with the foreboding that some dreadful thing might take place.

Greatly disturbed, he said under the impulse of his sudden terror: "Emma! I must see you—unless you have quite forgotten me, or think me the vilest of wretches, let me come to you. I must come—speak with you—tell you—Oh, answer me only one word, I beg of you!"

"They are noticing us. Adieu! I have no more to say. The past has died out of my heart so entirely that I have forgotten all; if I do remember anything, it is with shame." She gave him one last glance as he stood there, pale as death—and walked away.

Those last words were untrue; but by that untruth she

had taken all her revenge; and now, walking about in the *salon*, she felt so much regret at having spoken them that she could not repress the craving to return, throw herself at his feet, and entreat his forgiveness. But she did not yield to it. She walked on deliberately, smiling at her friends and acquaintances, exchanging friendly looks and words, though she scarce knew who they were. She had come to the Endelmans on purpose to see Charles, and she had decided to do so after long months of agony and fearful struggles with her melancholy and with the love which was eating her up. She wanted to see him, to speak to him; for at the core of her heart, beneath all those accumulations of sufferings and of disappointments, there was still a tiny flamelet of hope that perhaps he loved her yet; that possibly something unexplained had driven them apart, but only for the time being; and that something once explained, once removed——

Now she returned; and her heart was like a grave in which all that was living had decayed into inanimate remnants, given over to the great dead silence of night everlasting.

Meantime Boroviecki repaired to the refreshment room. And indeed he was in need of refreshment. He had swallowed her last words as a wolf may swallow the bait of frozen fat in which a spring has been inserted: little by little uncoiling, it tears the beast's entrails apart with intolerable agony. Anything else he could have borne: tears, reproaches, despair—anything but that contempt, which he felt like a blow in the face. And yet he had to bear it. Mrs. Endelman had taken him to admire her art collections and paintings, which had been put together in several rooms in a somewhat random way. But she was compelled to relinquish him to Grosplik, with whom he had some business dealings.

When the concert ended, the company broke up again into groups. Shaya, surrounded by his court, made for the buffet, and Mrs. Travinska now reigned supreme in the drawing-room, in the midst of a circle of girls, among whom were Rose and Mela.

From time to time, Mrs. Endelman would approach someone and say triumphantly: "All Lodz is here to-day; and

they are all enjoying themselves perfectly, are they not?"

"Wonderfully!" everyone would reply, stifling a yawn; for, as a matter of fact, no one enjoyed himself really.

"Mr. Endelman!" she cried to her husband, who at once came up, dancing as he came, his fat paunch and unwieldy legs making him a rather ridiculous object. "Mr. Endelman, let the ices be brought into the Chinese boudoir."

"Brought in at once?" he asked, with one hand at his ear to catch the answer.

"At once; and champagne for the men." Then she added, in a lower voice: "They are enjoying themselves well, aren't they?"

"What? Ah, yes, very well, very well indeed. Almost all our champagne is gone." And presently, as Bernard happened to pass: "Those louts!" he whispered in his ear; "they swill our champagne as they would Bavarian beer, what?"

"Well, but you have plenty left in the cellar."

"Yes, I have wine, but they have no manners. To drink, and drink, and drink, as if it all cost nothing!"

"O you funny fellow! I must tell all Lodz about you."

"What? No, Bernard, no! don't be such a fool!"

He paid no heed to him, though, and at once sat down beside Rose to tell her.

"Gentlemen, the ladies have no fun all by themselves," Endelman then shouted to the young fellows assembled in the refreshment room, in order to get them away from the champagne. Not one of them stirred.

Bernard was the only man to entertain the ladies. Seated opposite Mrs. Travinska, he set the conversation going, now and again letting off such curious paradoxes that Rose, in her efforts not to laugh, almost bent double, while Mrs. Travinska laughed quite easily and openly at his buffooneries, as though condescending to them. But her eyes were turned towards her husband, now talking with Boroviecki, close to the statue of Diana, and in voices so loud that she could catch a word now and then.

The rest of the visitors were passably bored. Mada walked about as if half asleep, ostensibly admiring the pictures,

but in reality trying to get nearer to Charles. The more elderly women were dozing in easy-chairs, or assembled in boudoirs to hear the latest gossip. The younger ones crowded to hear Bernard confabulating with Mrs. Travinska, but looked with a mournful air towards the refreshment room, where they heard the voices of their husbands or their fathers, loud with imbibed champagne. Little by little, weariness crept over the whole of the drawing-room; and the men looked at one another with more than tedium, even with hostility—as if the other were somehow responsible for the nausea felt by both.

Toilets had been discussed; the jewels with which women and maidens were literally burdened had been appraised; the drawing-room, the host and hostess, nay, the guests themselves, had been run down; what else was there to do? For there was nothing in common between the men and women who had come together, nothing to unite them in a whole. Why had they come? Because in Lodzian society it was good form to frequent the Endelmans', good form to go into raptures over their collection of paintings, just as it was good form to go to the play occasionally, to give something to the poor now and then, to complain of Lodz, to travel abroad, and so on. They had, though with difficulty, bowed their necks to the yoke of the forms and customs generally accepted in the world: but these were, all the same, foreign to their nature, and in truth they really cared for none of those things.

"Mr. Grosplik, just look at that madonna: it's a Dresden madonna."

"A splendid painting!" old Lieberman drawled, who, hands in pockets, thrust forth his great abdomen, and, sinking his chin on his chest, eyed the frame of the picture very closely.

Here Endelman interfered. "It's a painting that got a medal. See here, you have: '*Médaille d'or.*' It's a great painting, and cost a mint of money, what?"

"How much?" Grosplik croaked, stroking his stiff black side-whiskers, that hung on either side of his round face, with the fore-finger of his left hand, on which a bloodstone

gleamed in a gold ring. His whiskers were like mutton-chops, and the rest of his face was clean-shaven. It was his way to lift his chin so high that two thick folds of skin were formed at the nape of his neck, over the back of his collar, thus making him not unlike a short, fat pig trying in vain to pull down some linen from a fence. His right hand was usually in the pocket of his white waistcoat. "How much?" he repeated softly, as he always spoke, and with a serious mien, raising his eyebrows, delineated in two crescents on his bulging forehead, and in powerful contrast with his hoary hair and rosy complexion.

"I don't remember the sum; that's my secretary's business," Endelman replied in an offhand manner.

"Just look at this *genre* painting: it is really moving, it's alive!"

"First-rate colouring!" someone growled.

"Ay, and the capital it represents is still more so!"

"Ya, ya! the very frame of this landscape cost a large sum," said big Knaabe ponderously, as he tapped his cigar-holder on the bronze frame with the air of a connoisseur.

"But Mr. Endelman can afford gold frames, for whoever can afford a hat can afford a head to put it in," Grosplik remarked jocosely. He had a weakness for always illustrating his arguments with examples.

"That, Mr. Grosplik, is the saying of a genius," Bernard said, managing somehow not to laugh at him.

"I can afford such a thing too," the banker returned with due modesty.

"Gentlemen, here is another madonna, a copy, indeed, from Cimabue, but superior to the original. I give you my word it is, for it cost me four thousand roubles, what?" he exclaimed, seeing a sceptical smile curl the banker's lips.

"Let's have a look. I like madonnas particularly. I bought a madonna by Murillo for my Mary. She loves to have such paintings in her room, so why should I not buy her one?"

They continued in the same fashion, criticizing a good many pictures, and stopped in front of a big painting taking

up one half of the wall and representing the descent into Hades.

"Quite a large work," Knaabe observed approvingly.

Endelman was for giving the subject of the picture, but Grosplik cut in with some heat: "The artist is a common grave-digger, and the painting has no sense! Why give us such dismal things? Whenever I see a funeral, my heart is out of order for a couple of days, and I have to see the doctor. If a man has to die, better let him get drowned."

Here Mrs. Endelman came up. "The concert, second part! Please come to the drawing-room."

"We heartily congratulate you on such a collection, Mr. and Mrs. Endelman," cried the banker.

"What are they going to have in the drawing-room now?"

"Here's the program; all in print!" Bernard said, handing him a long strip of red cloth, embellished with a hand-painted picture, and with the printed program in French.

They entered the drawing-room, now quiet again. A couple of hired professionals were giving a dialogue in the French language. The men, crowding about the refreshment-room doorway, heard it with but little interest, and presently returned to their forsaken bottles and glasses; but the women were most attentive, listening greedily to the two reciters, playing the parts of two naïve lovers, who had unfortunately been captured by mountain banditti, carried off, and separated from each other. They had just met again, and related their respective mishaps with such wealth of prurient simplicity and of ribald elegance that the ladies were shaking with laughter, and applauded them with the greatest enthusiasm at every moment.

"*Ab, mon Dieu, mon Dieu! Très joli, très joli!*" Mrs. Cohn was crying in vociferous raptures. The wife of one of the manufacturers, she glittered with gems like a jeweller's shop-front; her small eyes, which looked yet smaller for the masses of fat round them, were weeping tears of delight; and she enjoyed herself so intensely that her heavy, flabby cheeks trembled like blancmange, as did also her plump arms,

which resembled big rolling-pins encased in black velvet.

"Those players, Endelman: how much have they cost you?" Grosplik inquired.

"One hundred roubles and their supper! But they're worth a thousand, since my guests get so much enjoyment out of them."

"Well," Bernard inquired of Boroviecki, "how do you like my sister-in-law?"

"She is an exceptional woman, whatever they may say: a patron of art, a collector."

"In order to be praised. In her opinion, her collection raises her far above the dull blind herd of millionaires. It's no question of love for art. Only ambition."

"The motive is nothing. And, that set aside, she really has a considerable number of good works of art."

"Oh, but her system of procuring them is peculiar. If there's a picture she likes, she makes her approaches with the utmost caution, asks of all connoisseurs and dealers how much it may be worth, and then haggles and bargains until she's quite sure she cannot possibly lose if she buys."

"Are you coming to the hotel? Kurovski is to be there to-day."

"Surely; it is two months since I met him."

"Please make my excuses to your brother and Mrs. Endelman: I have to be off directly."

They shook hands and Charles went out unobserved. When he got to Piotrovskia Street, twilight was falling already, and shop-fronts and street lamps were lighted.

Once out in the fresh air, he drew a long breath of relief. He had waited to leave Mrs. Endelman's until Mrs. Likiert had gone, in order to prevent remarks and comments being made, which had not a little injured Emma's reputation as it was. The waiting had been very distasteful to him, caring, as he did, neither for the company, nor for the recitation, nor for the new picture on view. And he still remained under the blow given him by his extraordinary conversation with Emma—and by her last words especially. Nor could he

clearly realize his own state of mind; never yet had he felt so unstrung, so wounded.

"I am scorned, I am hated by her!" he thought, and the pain of that scorn, that hatred, sank deeper and deeper into his soul.

CHAPTER XII



OUTSIDE the door of his house, on the sidewalk, a woman with her four children was awaiting him, the same who had applied to him for compensation after her husband's death.

"Honoured sir, I come to your Honour with a humble petition," she entreated him, falling down at his feet.

"What do you want?" he answered sternly.

"What you promised me, honoured sir—that the factory should pay me the compensation due, because the machine tore my husband to pieces."

"Oh, you are Mihalak's widow!" he said, now more kindly, noting her eyes, red with tears, and her haggard, livid face, on which misery had set its stamp.

"Yes, Mihalak's widow, who have been petitioning here since last autumn."

"They are to pay you two hundred roubles. You ought to go to Mr. Bauer, who will settle the whole affair; it is in his hands."

"I saw that German to-day: that pestilential fellow! He had me driven downstairs, and bade the manservant tell me I should be put in prison if I ever came again molesting him on one of his holidays."

"Come next Monday to Mr. Bucholc's office; they will pay you there. Be patient for one day more."

"Ay, honoured sir, I have been patient. Summer passed by, and the time of potato-digging likewise; winter brought hard times, and spring is now at hand; and still I am patient, honoured sir." She fell a-weeping noiselessly, and looked at him with an immense helplessness in her eyes.

"Well, come on Monday, as I have said"; and with the words Charles went into the house and ordered Matthew to take the woman a rouble.

"What, is she still there? Three times already have I turned her out of the entrance-passageway, and like a bitch with her puppies she comes again, whining outside the door! What's to be done? I shall have to give her a beating."

"You will have to give her this rouble, and not so much as lay a finger on her, do you hear?" he cried in a rage, and went on to his own room.

Max, smoking his pipe, was lying on the ottoman. Murray, clad in black and very greatly excited, sat near him, looking into the bottom of his hat, that was in his hand. His jaw, which seemed always chewing something, moved up and down more quickly than usual, and he had shrugged his hump so assiduously that half his coat was now lying on his shoulders.

Charles gave each of them a nod as he passed through to his room. He set in order the letters on his desk, arranged the flowers, cast a long look at Anka's photograph, and opened a letter that had come in for him, but did not read it. He put it down, paced the room, sat down now on one chair, now on another, and looked out of the window.

He was like a man struck with a mortal blow, who cannot make out what has come upon him, who reels about and seeks instinctively to regain his senses and fix his thoughts on any subject, no matter what. He could not blot out the rankling memory of Emma's last words.

At last he sat down by the window, gazing vacantly at the dying day, with its last fires fading away over the town. The room became flooded with a turbid dingy greyness, bringing with it those low spirits, that despondency, which he now experienced. He did not desire his lamp to be lighted, but sat in the gloom, listening to the noises that lulled the drowsy street.

Max's voice in the next room was seldom audible, but he could hear the dull heavy tones of the Englishman, saying: "What would you have? Even a dog gets accustomed to

its own kennel. Do you know, when I go to see the Smolinskis, I feel so wonderfully warm, so sweetly at peace, so cosy, so bright, so full of gladness, that I cannot think of returning to my lodgings without dismay—to those bare walls, those dark and chilly apartments. And I have taken my resolution this very day, so disgusted am I with bachelorhood."

"To propose—for the *n*-th time?" Max grunted.

"Yes, I shall propose; the wedding will take place at once after Easter. I shall take a holiday in June, and set out to England with my wife, and see my family. Oh!" he went on to say, "how beautiful she looked in church to-day!"

"And who is she, this chosen one of yours?"

"You shall know to-morrow."

Max felt some curiosity. "A Jewish, a German, or a Polish girl?" he asked.

"Oh, a Polish girl."

"Then if she's a Catholic, she will not have you. They all cling to their religion as hard as drunkards to their cups."

"That is no matter. Let me tell you: as soon as I'm engaged, I shall turn Catholic. It's all the same to me. Your religion is love; mine too!"

"But—for love—will no one but a wife do?"

"Only a wife can be loved and honoured at the same time; only a wife can be worthy of adoration."

"Slowly, slowly, my dear Murray! Do not anticipate! You have never been married yet; couldn't you first make a trial trip?"

Boroviecki appeared, interrupting their talk. "Max, will you come and see Kurovski?"

"I will. Are you going out now?"

"Yes. Good-night, Murray."

"I shall accompany you," the latter said. And pulling his coat down, he went out with a farewell to Max.

The streets were empty of people, and silence filled this section of the city. The low, ground-floor houses looked into the street with bright unshuttered casements, so that the interior of each dwelling was in full sight.

Boroviecki held his peace, but Murray, peeping in with interest, often stopped and said: "Pray look there; how beautiful!" And he pointed to some casement whose thin blind let them see a large room behind it, and the family seated round a table in the centre, under a suspended lamp.

The red-faced paterfamilias, with a napkin tucked round his neck, was ladling out soup from a steaming tureen on to the plates of his children, who followed each of his movements with hungry eyes. The mother, a buxom German Frau, with fair hair, blue eyes, and a smiling face, wore a blue apron, and was setting plates before a grey-haired old woman and an aged man, who knocked the ashes out of his pipe and seemed to relate some event.

"How very happy they all must be!" Murray whispered, devouring this everyday scene with envious eyes.

"Yes, no doubt. They are warm, have a good appetite, and a dinner to eat on the table," Charles assented unsympathetically, and set off walking at such a rate that the Englishman lagged behind, to saunter on slowly and peep into each of the lighted windows.

He suffered from love-and-a-home-sickness.

Boroviecki had meanwhile mingled with the crowd of workmen, pouring out of the side streets and into the sidewalks of Piotrovska; and borne on by the stream, he went along. It was still too early to meet Kurovski. He had no mind to enter any drinking-bar; he was driven from his lodgings by sheer boredom—and so, not knowing what to do with himself for the next few hours, he strolled along the street. Turning off at Benedict Street, he presently passed into Spacerova, which was darker and more quiet, and he walked from one end of it to the other, and then back again.

He was in fact walking with the fixed intention of tiring himself out, and silencing by means of physical fatigue those extraordinary voices—of awakened conscience, perhaps?—that were now inflicting on him pangs ever sharper and sharper, and that later became a sense, as yet dull and sub-conscious only, of sorrow for Emma.

Once more he reflected on that liaison of theirs, broken off

so brutally, so inhumanly—and cancelled now by her with contempt and with aversion. He was no inexperienced youth, nor a nature prone to sentiment, nor at all ready to feel for human sufferings. Nevertheless he was aware—and the knowledge brought with it a grinding pain—that he had done her grievous wrong. Moreover, he now recalled her kisses of old days, her love, her nobility of mind, and everything the remembrance of which, revived there at the Endelmans', had made his heart beat quicker; everything that was at present arousing within him such profound, overpowering agitation, so mighty and persistent a desire.

Yes, once more he yearned for her love. He could not stand it—the thought that they were separated eternally, that he should nevermore kiss her lips, nevermore see her proud head resting on his shoulder. So fearfully unstrung was he that more than once he turned his steps towards her house, and thought, with a violently palpitating heart, with what a cry she might welcome him!

But he did not go there, and continued his walk to and fro in the street. He would have had to find some justification of his conduct, and there was none whatever.

And then he burned with shame, remembering too well the oath and solemn vow of everlasting love which he had sworn to her not so very long ago.

And then there was the shame he felt at those soft unmanly emotions under the influence of which he knew he was falling now! He had gone in for reason alone, cool business common sense; and he had thus done many an evil thing with deliberate intention, and purposely fortified and armoured his heart with all the sophisms of self-interest. From the account-book of his life he had eliminated every item that bore the slightest trace of sentiment, of unreflective impulse, or of interest in anything beyond self—of anything, in a word, that might be in the way of his making such a fortune as would enable him to enjoy life tranquilly and to the full. He had speculated, but with cool reflection; made love to women, but with just as cool deliberate reckoning. And he had schooled himself so well that he sometimes

felt himself another man, a new one, and thought that the impulses, aspirations, and beliefs imbibed at home, at school, and in his own social world, had now entirely died out of him.

Great was his error! Something had fallen upon him, but nothing more tangible than the scorn of a woman he once had loved; and this alone, this less than an atom, had by the mysterious power of association brought up to light those worlds of mental life which he had been at such pains to bury underground. Now he saw with dismay that he had not quite steeped his whole soul in money-making, in factory work, and in an utterly egotistical life; and that it was as full as ever of those "illusions" that had now awaked and asserted their rights with greater insistence than ever. His first youth, rising, so to speak, from the ashes of his matter-of-fact life in Lodz, had come back to him, and he hungered now to know the feelings of the heart once more. Solitude had become irksome to him.

"And I have not a place to go to!" he thought.

He had not forgotten his promise to be with Lucy at twilight; he had broken it. Now that the melancholy remembrance of Emma had softened his heart, and after the many shocks it had undergone, Lucy was an object of remorse to him. Her vulgarity, her foolishness, chafed and irritated him; and he could not now see in her a single one of those good qualities he had found only the day before. He would certainly have declared that she was bereft of any, had he now been called to pass judgment upon her—and thus quieted in some degree both his conscience and his badly shaken nerves.

At last, tired of thinking, he betook himself to the hotel where dwelt Kurovski, whom he had not seen for several weeks.

The servant whom he met on the first floor and asked to announce him said he would ascertain whether he was up yet. Returning in a minute, he ushered Charles in.

"Is that you, Charles?" a powerful yet pleasant voice called out from the next room.

"It is.—Not asleep, surely?"

"Not quite. Please pass into the sitting-room, I'll be with you in a few minutes."

Charles walked somewhat impatiently about the beautifully furnished sitting-room, awaiting the advent of Kurovski.

Besides his lodgings at the village close by his works, Kurovski rented apartments in Lodz, "for discretion's sake," as he used to say. Every Saturday he came there, and was wont to receive a number of good acquaintances, with whom he would drink, converse, and play at cards. He would then stay in bed all Sunday, and drive off in the evening, to disappear for the whole week. For several years he had kept up this sort of life.

He had not one single friend, though on quite familiar terms—using *thee* and *thou*—with the men whom he admitted to visit him.

The man was a nondescript—one out of his sphere, who in the Promised Land of Lodz had risen instead of going under, adapting himself to the place, so far as making money and breaking with his own social set would go.

Very little was known of him. Ten years previously he had come there with the remnants of a large fortune, which he had probably squandered in making merry. He set up a factory in partnership with some business man or other of a shady type, and gave up the concern in a year's time, quite penniless. Subsequently he attempted to manage affairs by himself, but equally without success. Then he "taught himself how to work," as he described those years of hardship spent in a subordinate capacity at Bucholc's.

At length he started a small chemical factory (he had studied chemistry at one time in Germany and gone through the whole course), with the result that he did not lose at all, but got rid of his partner—formerly a landed man—who went to Warsaw to get some situation in the tramway service.

Kurovski's factory then developed at a frantic, an American, rate of growth, and such as in these parts is only possible in Lodz. But it became a success only by reason of his

energy, his wonderful perseverance, and his efficient administration and great technical proficiency. He made no bankruptcies, was not even once burnt out, cheated no one, and yet was now fast accumulating a fortune. He had resolved to do so, and this he was doing by sheer hard work and grit.

Business apart, he was an eccentric fellow. An aristocrat to the backbone, and yet a hater of the aristocracy; a conservative with a fanatical belief in progress and science; a liberal who was also a furious partisan of absolute government; a sincere Catholic, but still more sincerely a man who treated all religions with irony; a perfect sybarite, to whom labour was insupportable, and at the same time a most strenuous and indefatigable worker. He made fun of everything and of everybody, but had a most feeling heart for all misfortunes, together with a lofty, broad-minded compassion for all. And yet all these inconsistencies only formed the exterior of a very homogeneous and original personality.

Boroviecki stopped in his walk. He thought he had caught something like the sound of a female voice and the rustle of a dress in Kurovski's room; but it was heard no more, and Kurovski came in.

He seemed ill at ease, welcomed his guest and sat down looking rather fidgety.

"Is anyone coming here to-day?" he asked, raising his large hazel eyes to Boroviecki's.

"They all are coming, so far as I know. You see, we have not seen you for three weeks."

"Sorry you haven't, are you?" he rejoined carelessly, with a flickering smile.

"Sorry at least that you doubt it."

"But I don't. I should have to appoint a time for exercising that royal prerogative of mind on you."

"And you will not?"

"I cannot somehow. Apart from your being so inscrutable, you just now have the air of a husband betrayed by his wife for the first time."

"Why not say: 'the air of a man with a bad digestion'?"

Charles exclaimed, piqued by this simile, not so far from the truth.

"As you please.—But are they really coming?" he asked, looking at his watch, and casting a glance full of mischief and drollery at the curtain over his bedroom door from behind which there issued a scarcely perceptible sound.

"Max, Endelman, and Kessler will certainly be here. Max has slept to the utmost, and the other two have been frightfully bored at the Endelmans' reception to-day."

"And I was invited!—Well, well!—Were there plenty of golden calves present?"

Boroviecki smiled grimly in reply, and there was a pause.

"Is there anything the matter with you then?" Kurovski asked.

"Why have you not been in Lodz these three last weeks?" Charles asked in reply.

"Ah! why indeed?" Kurovski threw a knife into the air and caught it up with the dexterity of a juggler. "Why? This is why." He turned half round and showed his left arm in a sling.

"An accident?"

"Yes. Two inches of steel."

"When?" Charles demanded, as if in disbelief.

"A fortnight since," was the reply; and Kurovski's dark brows came together over his eyes, fierce and menacing.

It was only then that Charles noticed his hollow eyes, and the sickly pallor of his cheeks. "A woman—" he said musingly, rather than as a question.

"Not a single one do I know for whom I'd endanger a finger-nail!" was the swift reply, as Kurovski stroked restlessly his black but scanty hair, and his beard, also black, which hid his collar and part of his chest.

"Because there are none worth it! Not one!" Charles cried hotly. "Either they are mere foolish females of the species, or they are blubbering sentimental geese. I have never found amongst them one complete specimen of humanity."

"Because it was not humanity you were seeking in your

sweethearts—it was passion. In such a matter you have no right to speak, until you have given up all this babble about women not being human, until you have ceased to treat them as toys or as dainty morsels; until you no longer view them through the prism of appetite, mere appetite.”

“Who amongst us, I wonder, can see young and pretty women otherwise?”

“Who indeed? Certainly not I,” Kurovski returned listlessly.

“For what reason, then, do you deny me the right of judging them?”

“And for what reason do you deny me the right to contradict myself, if only in appearance?” And he laughed.

“In that case, what’s the good of mere empty playing with words?”

“That’s the conclusion I reached from the first, and you have been forty minutes about it.”

“Good-evening,” Charles said in a very bad temper, and was about to quit the room, when Kurovski hastened to prevent him.

“Don’t fly out so. You’re exasperated with someone else, and pass your exasperation on to me. Stay on,” he continued; “I should like to have no one but you here to-day.”

Borowiecki stayed on, sat down in an arm-chair and gazed with dull eyes at a score of tapers burning in great silver chandeliers. Kurovski would have neither oil nor gas nor electric light in his rooms.

“Don’t say you’ll see no one else to-night; I am going away directly.”

“I unsay it. Of course I want to have a look at the Lodzian Hamlet the Little—that Bernard, who not only spoils what I say by imitating me, but even copies the colour of my socks! And of course I want to behold Max, that mass of flesh, and that wolf, Kessler—to say nothing of the rest of them.”

“Had you no one to entertain you when ill?”

“Ah, to entertain!—Yes, I’ll admit frankly you are all at times highly *entertaining*.”

"That's not a bad thing to know. In all our names, let me thank you for your frankness."

"No need; it's not hard to be frank," he ejaculated, with so droll a look that their eyes met, and they smiled and were silent awhile.

Kurovski went for a moment into the adjoining room, and presently returned. Charles gave him a wistful look. He felt a great mind to speak to the man and tell him all—at least covertly. But he held his tongue. Kurovski's frigid manner and sharp sarcastic tongue simply froze him. He contained himself and kept down by force the words that were rising to his lips.

"And what about your factory?" the other asked presently.

"I refer you to my last letter. In a week's time Moritz is coming; then we shall set to work."

"Oh! I forgot to say, I saw Miss Anne in Warsaw."

"Did you? I never knew she was there at all."

"What should she tell you for? Must the whole world end—for a girl—with herself and her intended?"

"That's just where I thought it should end."

"Unless she has a lover! Why don't you set such limits for yourself, Charles?"

"A strange question from you, who are a follower of Björnstjerne Björnson's ideas! I doubt if your sweetheart would agree to that change of front!"

"A—h!" Kurovski yawned. "Now we are talking of matters quite out of my sphere."

"For to-day!"

"Perhaps for to-morrow as well," he concluded, and rang for the waiter, whom he directed to let no one come in to him that evening, and to bring the supper menu.

Charles drowsily stretched his legs out and rested his head on the back of his chair.

"Shall I tell them to bring in a bed for you?"

"Many thanks; I'm off in a minute. I do feel terribly knocked up—disgustingly dull, and with the dullness gaining upon me."

"Order your servant to give you a slap in the face:

that will brace you up finely. A drastic remedy, but apathy is the worst enemy to life that can be."

"You never answered whether you would grant us credit."

"I shall. By the by, why didn't you tell the servant, when you came, that you had come on business? I should have sent you word that I transact business only in my office. Here I only receive friends."

"Forgive me; I spoke thoughtlessly. But don't wonder at my being so taken up with my future factory; I want to see it in action as soon as may be."

"Are you hankering after money so?"

"After independence rather."

"Only people who have nothing are independent; millionaires, never. Any man who has one rouble is dependent on that one rouble."

"A paradox!"

"Think it over, and you'll see it's a truth."

"Possibly. At any rate, I'd prefer to be dependent—as Bucholc is—only on the millions I may have than on the first upstart clod-hopper I meet."

"That's another thing, and more of a practical matter. But if we take a wider view of things, we shall see that independence, in its general idea, is a pure illusion, and that the special independence of the rich is mere slavery. Knoll, for instance, Bucholc, Shaya, Müller—and all the rest of them—are the most wretched thralls in their own factories: self-acting mechanisms at the most, and nothing more! You surely know what factory life—the life of a manufacturer—is; quite as well as I do. Well, consider what an anomalous state of things we have in the world now. Man has brought many forces of nature under his yoke and discovered new forces; and behold him the slave of those very forces he has yoked! A man creates a machine; the machine in its turn makes its master work for it. And the machine will grow in power *ad infinitum*; and so, too, will the man's bondage increase.—There you are! Victory is always more costly than defeat.—Think on that!"

He ordered a bottle of wine, and drank abundantly himself.

"A pity I did not live a hundred years ago!"

"But why?"

"A hundred years ago things were all right still. There still were potent instincts and mighty passions, since there were criminals like Danton, Robespierre, and Napoleon. If there were traitors, they betrayed whole nations; if there were thieves, those thieves stole empires! What have we now? why, only pickpockets, and fellows who stab you with pen-knives!"

"In those days your chemicals would not have been wanted."

"I should have done something else—helped Robespierre to guillotine Danton, and Barras to guillotine Robespierre—and cudgelled the others to death and thrown them to the dogs."

"And finally?" Charles queried, eyeing him uneasily, for his eyes were closed as he talked, and he seemed a little beside himself.

"And finally?—I should have spat in the face of Madame Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité, who is all rotten gibberish—and gone to help the Great Man to cleanse the world from the rabble!"

Charles burst out laughing, and took up his hat. "Well, good-night."

"Going already? You have not been here more than an hour and a half."

"Are you so exact in counting as all that?"

"I feared you might be staying longer.—But enough of this foolery. Next Saturday I shall be expecting you and all the others."

"I hope to be with my intended at that date."

"Send someone in your place, and come yourself on Sunday. I rely on you absolutely."

Charles went down Piotrovskia Street, but felt even more out of sorts and weary than he had felt before. There was still something of his former mood left in his mind, but he

had at least succeeded in ridding himself of that sombre uneasiness and of the pricks of his conscience. His introspective surveys became less frequent; the paradoxical arguments of Kurovski rang in his ears for some time yet, but he got rid of them too.

Taking a cab, he drove home, intending to go to bed at once, and to sleep there for ever and ever.

In the entrance-passage there was Matthew, playing the concertina in the long, dark corridor for several servants from the neighbouring houses, who were waltzing merrily. Charles's appearance put an end to their fun, Matthew going in with his master.

Max Baum was no longer at home; there was only the samovar, bubbling and hissing still.

Charles had his bed made and told his man to make no noise in the passage, for he was going to bed at once. But when alone in the silence of his apartment, he was seized with such an overwhelming fit of weariness that he could not tell what to do with himself. He undressed, but without going to bed; looked over some papers, but threw them down on the table with disgust. He peered into Max's room; it was dark, and the dark seemed to breathe emptiness.

Then he gazed out into the silent street, sleeping now that the holiday was over. The stillness of the whole house was infinitely depressing: every corner exhaled low spirits and cheerlessness.

No longer able to support this awful lonesomeness, he dressed again quickly. He had forgotten all his troubles about poor Emma, and his resolutions to lead a new life. He drove to Lucy's house.

CHAPTER XIII



THE afternoon of the following day found Boroviecki lively, refreshed, and tranquil. The tempest was over, and had left no trace of its passage but a smile of mockery at himself, when he recalled it. As full of brightness and joy as that Sunday which had flooded Lodz with its glorious beams, and warmed it with the gladness of returning spring, he was sallying forth to visit the Müllers. He had dressed himself up for that purpose with such extreme care that Max scowled at him, and growled: "A young lover in a play!"

But Max was in a specially cantankerous mood that morning. He had come home later than usual, risen still later (at two in the afternoon), shambled about the lodgings in his slippers, peered into every corner, and tried to dress. But everything had gone wrong with him. He had scattered his clothes and linen all over the room, kicking them to and fro in fits of pettishness, scolding Matthew, abusing the laundress for having scorched his collars, and again raging against the shoemaker, who had, he said, mended his boots badly, and left sharp pegs inside the soles, though Matthew swore by all the saints he knew that this was not the case, and that the boots were smooth as velvet within. He dashed them down on to the floor, flung the poker (which he had been using on them) under the stove, and set to undress himself at full speed.

"What are you at?"

"Going to bed!" he growled. "Devil take it! I can't put on this boot of mine, it hurts me so; that jade has scorched all my collars; it's a hell at home, and I can't bear any more. Matthew!" he roared, "should anyone come to see me, I'm not at home. Do you hear?"

"Very well, sir. And should what's her name—the girl Antka—come here?"

"Turn her out. And if you wake me, I'll twist your neck round, and put your mug in such a state that your very sweetheart won't know you. Gag the telephone, bring the samovar and all the newspapers."

"Did anything happen in your factory? What?" Charles asked.

"What? From to-morrow we are to shorten our men's working-hours by twenty-five per cent! The season is dead, nothing can be sold; our warehouse is chock-full, and all the bills of exchange are unpaid. And on the top of that, Father—instead of having long ago shortened our working-hours or sent half the workmen packing—falls a-weeping and says these poor people will have nothing to eat! Besides that, he endorses the bills of ever so many rascals.—In a year we shall be starving. Let him, if he likes it; but why should I starve as well?"

"But half of the factories are also diminishing their payments, sending workmen away, and cutting down production. I heard this at the Endelmans' yesterday; they talked about it quite a long time."

"Devil take them all! What do I care for them? Let them leave me to sleep in peace!"

He dived under the counterpane, turned his face to the wall, and puffed and snorted with rage.

"Your father must be much grieved; I am truly sorry for him."

"Don't talk about him to me; I'm in such a taking, I'd give him gratis to anybody who would have him!" he cried, sitting up in bed with a violent jerk. "The old wiseacre! He himself works like any of the men, he is himself tired out, and yet he says he will not go to Ems this year, though the doctor not only advised but ordered him to go!—All his looms will be presently at a standstill, he manages things so.—And yesterday Bertha's husband, that nice fellow, Fritz Wehr, came and got round him so that the old man forked out almost all the money he had and gave it to that

scoundrel!—Afterwards he told Mother he felt so fit that he had no need to go to Ems!—I don't know what will become of us; I have lost all hope of saving our firm. With all his honesty and forty years of work, I shall be forced, if he dies presently, to pay for the funeral myself!"

"It's too soon to talk of that; he'll hold out for a long time yet."

"But the firm cannot hold out for one year; and if the firm goes to pot, Father will never survive the blow. He'll die of it, I know him well.—But a man who wants to make hand looms compete with steam should be locked up in a madhouse!"

"Indeed, that is so whimsical a crank that it seems ridiculous."

"Ridiculous for strangers, but tragical for us. Especially just now, when all Lodz is shaken to pieces; when the very best firms are falling like lodged corn; when the whole town is rotten with bankruptcies, and no one knows to whom credit can be given and to whom not, because of the panic everywhere. What do you think? How have we been living for the last two years? Not by the sale of our blankets and counterpanes; Zuker has found means to copy those, and to sell his worthless imitations fifty per cent cheaper than we can afford to do. No; what keeps us going is our red printed calicoes: it's the red colour that he has not yet been able to imitate. This is the only sort of goods that really sells at all; but it's so dear that, should we sell all we could make, we should get ten per cent net profit.—Of this petty dealing I have enough, I say; and if you don't see our factory started pretty soon, I'll start one by myself, though without funds, and send everybody to the right-about! If I fail, I fail; but I shall have done something at any rate."

He laid himself down again, pulled the coverlet over his ears, and said no more.

"True," Charles said, "the season is a bad one; bankruptcies are the order of the day, we are all reducing our production—with the exception of three or four of the biggest firms, who have means to weather the storm.—Yes,

times are hard, but there are signs they are about to mend. The latest official news informs us that throughout all Russia the corn sown in autumn has borne the frosts splendidly, and promises an excellent harvest, unless the spring proves disappointing. If it does not, and if we have good crops for two or three years, the price of corn can hardly fall in the mean time, because the supplies—both here and abroad—have been exhausted, and because the crops have failed in India and in America. So that in autumn or thereabouts our markets will begin to look up again. And there's another reason, too, why the weaving industry will be better off. The Government has started gigantic enterprises, which must swallow up hundreds of millions and give employment to tens of thousands of men hitherto unemployed.—Do you hear what I say, Max?"

"I do. And I answer with the proverb: 'The traps are laid, but the birds are in the woods.'"

Charles made no answer, but put his hat on and went off to Müller's.

In Piotrovskia Street he caught a glimpse of Kozlovski, who prowled about the town day by day. He was now, as usual, standing in the attitude of a dancer, his silk hat on the back of his head, occasionally thrust forward with the knob of his cane, and then back again. He was talking with a theatre manager, who in his grey sheepskin cap, and with his blond, pendulous moustache and aquiline nose, looked for all the world like an ataman of the Zaporogian Cossacks.

He saluted them hurriedly and drove on, paying no attention to Kozlovski's signs for the droshky to stop.

The Müllers' residence stood in the rear of the factory buildings, separated from them by a garden and fronting another street. In this there were but few houses, and it was almost out of town; but it was well kept all the same, properly paved, with good side-walks and gas-lights, for the sufficient reason that several manufacturers had their dwellings in that street. The smaller house, which had not even a first floor, was continuous on one side with the more imposing one-storeyed residence.

From a window Mada's head stood out for a moment, yellow among a multitude of flowers, and then vanished.

In the passage he met Mrs. Müller, who opened the door for him, and wanted even to take his overcoat! Extremely timid and bashful, she motioned him silently into the room. "My husband is in his office. Mada is coming directly. Please be seated," she faltered, wheeling forward an arm-chair, on which she laid a cushion of red silk.

He tried to open a conversation; but though he broached the most utter commonplaces—the weather, the coming spring, the current market prices—Mrs. Müller was not to be drawn out, and persisted in patient taciturnity.

"Ya, ya!" she would reply, smoothing down her blue apron, and raising her blue eyes, faded by cooking over kitchen fires, and moving languidly in her heavy wrinkled face.

She wore a jacket of check cotton cloth. On her head, tied down under her chin, there was a woollen kerchief. In every way she looked just like an old cook; and, as a matter of fact, she brought in with her a faint odour of soup and of fritters, which pervaded the room. She was most happy in the kitchen, with a stocking to knit, such as was just then peeping out of the pocket of her apron.

"How is your health?" he at last said, in despair.

"Good, very good," she replied in wretched Polish, looking nervously towards the door through which Mada was to come.

"And—how are Mrs. Boroviecka and the children?" she went on to add, after long consideration.

"Oh, I am a bachelor as yet."

"Ya, ya! and Wilhelm, my boy, is a bachelor too. Do you know my Wilhelm?"

"I have that pleasure. Has he left Lodz yet?"

"Ya; for Berlin," she answered with a sigh, and possibly might in time have continued the conversation, had not Mada then come in, full of such radiant satisfaction that her mother looked her over, pulled her jacket down, and withdrew.

"You see, Miss Mada, that I sometimes keep my promises," he said, handing her a long list of books, which Horn had drawn up for him, Horn being on more familiar terms with literature than himself.

"And was this very hard for you to do?" she said, putting the peculiar German stress on the last letters of her Polish words.

"No; very easy, since it was done for you."

"And this is no fib?" she demanded quaintly.

"Oh no," he said, smiling. "Do you think men always tell fibs, Miss Mada?"

"I don't know. Wilhelm always does, and I don't believe one word he says."

"But me!—you'll believe me, I hope!"

Her talk was beginning to amuse him.

"If you never tell fibs, of course I must believe you."

"I solemnly promise you I never will."

"Good.—Do you know, Aunt has sent me the other books, and I have set about reading them."

"Do they interest you so much?"

"Oh yes. There are such pretty, touching passages that Mamma and I have cried over them. And Papa began by laughing at us, but last evening I had to read to him the whole time."

"Did you come home late from the Endelmans'?"

"It was dark when I left.—I saw you go."

"I was sorry, but had to leave earlier."

"The Endelmans have a lovely house, and treated us so very grandly!"

"I very much regret I could not see more of you, Miss Mada."

"But we talked about you, Mrs. Travinska and I."

"And you both said a great deal against me, didn't you?"

"No, oh no! It's the men who say things against us."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Why, whenever Wilhelm comes home from a visit or an evening party, he tells me all, and makes fun of all the women."

"But do you think every man does like him?"

"Tell me they don't, you, and I'll believe you!" she cried hastily, the blood surging all over her face.

"I can assure you they don't—not all at least."

So the talk went on, until, her childish prattle beginning to tire him, he turned to look at the flowers, which were perfectly well cared for, and filled the window-sill. He spoke of them with warm praise.

"I'll tell Gotlieb what you say, he will be so pleased."

"Who's Gotlieb?"

"Our gardener.—Mr. Störch does not like flowers. He says that if potatoes were grown in every one of these flower-pots, they would be of more use. But he's silly, isn't he?"

"He certainly is, if you say so."

She grew upon him more and more; and little by little, when she took courage and was less troubled with the blushes that now mantled more seldom over her cheeks, she even came to speak out so decidedly that he felt some surprise. She was quite unacquainted with social forms; for her father was a millionaire of too recent a date, and she had been bred between the kitchen and the factory, and among people of their own standing—weavers, factory hands, and so on; but she displayed a very lively mind and a good deal of shrewdness. From her original sincerity the hypocrisies of fashionable life had yet taken nothing. She at times sounded ridiculously childish, but was pleasing by her simplicity. She had even gone through a sort of high school in Saxony, from which country Müller had come to Lodz years ago, a simple weaver; and Lodz had proved really a Promised Land for him. Also, she was not without certain inklings as to the value of money in life, as was evident from some remarks of hers about a common acquaintance.

"Do you know that Mannia Godfryd has broken off her engagement?"

"I did not know. Do you feel shocked at her?"

"Only amazed. She has neither good looks nor a marriage portion; yet this is the second time she has done this thing."

"Perhaps she prefers to wait for some rich young mill-owner."

"But her intended may make a fortune. My father, when he married, had not got one thaler; and yet, all the same, he's a wealthy man now."

"But possibly Miss Godfryd prefers being an old maid?"

"No girl would be an old maid of her own free will!" she cried with no little warmth.

"Are you quite sure?"

"I never should at least," she rejoined. "I always feel sorry for old maids. So lonely, so unhappy!"

"That shows your kind heart."

"And then, people laugh at them so!—If I could, I'd manage for all women on earth to have husbands and children!"

She stopped short, attentive to see whether Boroviecki was laughing at her. But he repressed a smile, and with a glance at her golden lashes and flushed face, merely remarked with the utmost seriousness: "That would be a very good act on your part, Miss Mada."

"You are not making fun of me?" she inquired suspiciously.

"I admire your great kindness of heart."

"Papa is coming in," she whispered, drawing a little away from him.

Müller had come in by the door that led to the big house. He was wearing slippers noisy with wooden soles, and a thickly padded jacket, much the worse for grease.

With his plump, red, shining face, with no hair on it, but plenty of fat, he was strikingly like a saloon-keeper; only, instead of the conventional porcelain pipe, he had between his teeth a cigar, which he shoved frequently from one corner of his mouth to the other with his tongue.

"Why, Mada, I didn't know Mr. Boroviecki was here," he said, after welcoming him.

"Mamma didn't want to interrupt you in your work, Father."

"You see, Mr. Boroviecki, I too have my worries," he said,

taking the cigar out of his mouth, and using the cuspidor that was by the stove.

"You are no doubt producing less at present?"

"I must: there's so much ready material, and so few sales. The season has failed entirely. There still are some buyers, but they are all going bankrupt, or look like it. I have lost a good deal by them this year. What's to be done? Wait for times to mend."

"Ah," Charles observed with a smile, "even in the very worst of seasons what have you to fear?"

"H'm. A dead loss can never be regained even through the best of seasons.—Are they not shortening the hours at Bucholt's?"

"Quite the contrary; in the department of white goods there's to be evening work into the bargain."

"Always lucky! Is his health so poor still?"

"Better, I suppose, for he tries to go about."

"But, Mada, why are you keeping the gentleman here?—We have a palace for visitors."

"Will you kindly come with me?" she faltered.

"Let's both go; I'll show you my hut."

"About which such glorious things are spoken in Lodz."

"You will see. It cost me in all one hundred and sixty thousand roubles; but then everything in it is new. I don't buy those antiquated things the Endelmans do; I can afford new articles." He drew his caftan over his rather portly stomach, and made a grimace of contempt at the old and very costly furniture of the Endelmans.

They went up a narrow staircase that led from the old dwelling-house to the upper storey of the "palace," the whole of its ground-floor being taken up by the office of the principal factory. Mada ran forward and opened the great door, the latch of which was covered with cotton cloth.

"I'm glad you've come," said Müller, puffing, and rolling his cigar constantly from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"I have long been wanting to come, but never could find time."

"I know, I know," he said, clapping him on the back.

"We are too dull here; that's why you didn't care to come," Mada remarked, as she led the way into the "palace."

"Pray sit down on this beautiful sofa," Müller entreated.

The place was all in shadows, but Mada drew the blinds up, and the crude daylight filled a suite of superbly furnished rooms.

"Would you like to smoke a good cigar?"

"I never refuse one."

"Try these strong ones—seventy-five kopeks apiece."

Turning out his greasy trousers pockets, he pulled forth a handful of cigars, crushed, crumpled, and bent out of shape.

"Or try these. Not so strong; a rouble each," he added, throwing them on to a stand, and, rolling them straight with dirty hands, he bit off the end of one, and offered it to his guest.

"Maybe you'd prefer those stronger ones."

Boroviecki, not without some aversion, accepted one.

"Fine!—what?" Müller asked, swaggering about the room with his hands in his pockets.

"They're excellent; but those you smoke have not quite that flavour."

"Mine cost five pfennigs each. I smoke a great deal, and I'm used to them," he said to excuse himself.

"Will you have a look round the rooms?"

"With pleasure. Max Baum has told me about them."

"Mr. Max is your great friend," Mada put in.

"He's a clever boy; but his father has—something wrong in the upper storey."

"Look well, my dear sir, look over everything here; you'll find no worn-out rubbish. Everything has been made to order in Berlin."

"So you got all from abroad?"

"Every stick of furniture, my dear sir. Hüberman assured me that nothing worth having was to be procured in this country."

Charles held his peace and surveyed with somewhat cur-

sory glances the sets of furniture, the heavy silken or velvet *portières*, the carpets, the pictures (or rather the picture-frames; for Müller called his attention to these alone), the candelabra, costly but in bad taste, the short thick stoves of German majolica, and the mirrors, framed in Saxony porcelain, and specially intended for a lady's room.

Mada explained every piece of furniture to him in detail. She was enjoying his presence most heartily, and often raised to his face her blue chinaware eyes, which she at once hid under the penthouse of her golden lashes; for Charles also cast frequent looks at her face, so white, yet so thickly strewn with minute freckles, scattered all over it like peach-down.

All the time he was ejaculating: "Splendid! magnificent!"

The apartments were really appointed with the utmost grandeur that a self-made man was able to conceive. Everything was there that could be purchased for mere money: life alone and taste were wanting. There was a very daintily furnished study, in which no one ever did anything; a bathroom built all of white majolica with blue patterns, and a marble bath that was to be entered down several steps carpeted with scarlet cloth, under a ceiling adorned with paintings copied from Pompeii; but it was clear enough that no one ever entered it.

Beneath a turret which, like a great dumpy bale of wool, swelled upwards from the "palace" roof there was a room fitted up in the Moorish style. That is, the windows and walls and doors were scrawled over with ridiculous many-coloured travesties of arabesques, vulgar caricatures of the Moorish style; there were long, low sofas, covered with cotton cloths, painted in the same way. The whole apartment was a mere burlesque—an outrage on good taste—with glaring hues that bespattered the windows and the walls. Not there—under that Moorish dome, glittering with brick-and-copper paintings like an old saucepan unfit for use—did anyone ever sit.

"Spanish style," Müller observed.

Mada corrected him. "Moorish style; you're mistaken, Father."

"Did you put up all this?"

"I paid; Hüberman did the upholstering."

"Do you like this room?" Mada asked.

"Very much. It is even more original than it is beautiful."

He spoke thus, with a smile, and with intent to deceive.

"Dear, extremely dear! Hüberman got not less than two thousand roubles for the work. I myself don't care for gew-gaws and fal-lals; what I like is things of solid worth. But he talked me over, telling me there had to be something Chinese or Japanese in every first-class palace. And so—it was Mada's wish, not mine—he got it up in Moorish style for originality's sake; I didn't mind. 'Let it be as he pleases,' I said. 'I shall not meddle with it.'"

"Then you do not live in here?"

"If I did, Mr. Boroviecki, they would make fun of me, as they do of Meyer and of Endelman. I am cosier in my little home."

"A pity, though, to keep this quite empty."

"It is no matter. They all build palaces, so I had one built. They have grand rooms; so have I. People ought to know that Müller has a palace of his own, but prefers to live in his old lodgings."

And they went on to explore further.

In the midst of those apartments there was a long, narrow room, hung round with some dark-coloured stuff. Its window looked out upon the avenue which led to the factory. All round it there ran sofas of no great height, but with backs reaching half up the walls, and divided into separate seats, like a second-class railway coupé; the sofas were covered with red leather, embellished with golden flowers. A row of long, narrow mirrors looked gloomily down on the sofas and on the marble stands before them, with bronze rims running round each stand. This, Mada explained to him, was the smoking-room. But the immaculate freshness of the new sofas, and the stands set in such perfect order close by them, showed plainly that no one had ever smoked there.

They then went through a very large *salon*, lighted by four windows. It was perfectly white, save for a lavishly gilt

stucco ceiling; crammed with furniture, and crowded with paintings, candelabra, consoles, ottomans, and chairs, the latter standing in long lines against the walls and covered with white wrappers. There was every probability that no one had been in there yet, or had sat on any of the furniture.

Then came the dining-room, made to communicate with the kitchen by a dumb-waiter. All the furniture was in square mahogany, bordered with thin leaf-bronze; in the midst stood a massive table, and round the walls sideboards in Empire style, which Müller opened one after the other to show how they looked inside, crammed as they were with china and plate that nobody used.

A library there was also; for not even such a detail had been overlooked by the builders and upholsterers. It was a tiny room, provided with glazed bookcases in white oak, Old German style. Looking through the panes, one could see in gold lettering, on the back of every book, the names of all the great writers that ever lived; but no one there even knew their names, far less read their books.

At length they came round to the bedroom. There, in the middle, stood two enormous beds, covered with blue silk counterpanes, overcanopied with bed-curtains of the same hue; a blue carpet covered the whole of the floor, and blue hangings adorned the walls.

In a corner stood a great wash-stand for two persons. It was big enough to water a horse, and connected with the factory by means of hot-water pipes.

No one slept there.

"Oh, what a fine room to sleep in!" Charles murmured softly.

"It's for Mada, when she marries. Now let's go to Mada's room," Müller went on to say.

Mada made difficulties, protesting that it was not in proper order.

"A silly girl, that's what you are!" her father grumbled, and he took Charles to a room very full of light, and hung round with white and rosy red stuffs.

There were tiny pieces of furniture standing about pell-mell on a carpet of many colours.

"Just the place where pretty little notes should be written!" Boroviecki said, fixing his eyes on a very tiny desk, on which there stood a box of letter-paper and some writing-materials, the whole ranged in apple-pie order.

"Of what use is it to me," Mada complained, "when I have no one to write to? And yet how many a time I have been wanting to write!"

The complaint was sincere; but even as she made it, she smacked her lips at a couple of canaries in a brass cage on the window-sill that came dashing against the bars.

"Do they obey you?"

"Oh yes, and Wilhelm has come and whistled to them, and taught them to sing tunes."

"But, I say, Miss Mada! your room is just exactly like Gretchen's in Goethe's *Faust*."

She had no idea what to say to that, but blushed to the very roots of her hair.

As they left the palace, Charles once more had a look at those rooms; so many, so silent, solitary, and lifeless! They were extremely sumptuous, fresh, new, and gave the impression of an upholsterer's shop-front, magnificently fitted up, but absolutely tasteless. No one but Mada resided in that palace. It was on view for any visitors who came, and for Müller to be able to boast that he had one.

Below, in a little room close to the kitchen, where the whole family ate their meals, Mrs. Müller was pouring out the coffee. Charles said he had no time, but Müller would not hear of his going, took his hat away, and, catching hold of him, forced him into a chair. Now Mada was silently, but with eloquent eyes, begging him to stay, and so he yielded to please her; but he was forced to hurry, being obliged to see Bucholz that very day.

He asked Müller to use his influence with Shaya on behalf of Horn. This the old man readily promised to do, and to go to Shaya the very next day; moreover he guaran-

teed success, as he was on quite friendly terms with him.

Mrs. Müller offered her guest various cakes she had made herself, and several times rearranged Mada's disordered hair, that came tumbling over her forehead in golden wisps; the girl was so greatly pleased and excited that she was laughing continually and paid no heed to anything whatever. She could not even keep to herself the fact that she liked Charles exceedingly, but let him know it more than once in various ways.

Müller was pleased, too, put his arm round Charles's waist, slapped him on the knee, and talked a great deal about his factory. Charles did his best to feign an interest in it, listened patiently and made suitable replies; but he had enough of it, and was not less tired of being compelled to stay there than of the trite subjects of Müller's conversation.

Both in manners and in outlook upon the world the whole household bore the stamp of the lower middle class; but it also had the fragrance of German tidiness, and steady ox-like industry. Only in one point were the Müllers exceptional: their millions had done them no harm; they still possessed the instincts and desires of the working-classes.

"When you become our neighbour, you must come to see us oftener."

"What! are you to live near us?" Mada cried with beaming eyes.

"I am.—Do you see that long row of windows beyond Travinski's works?" he said, pointing to it.

"Why, that's Meisner's old factory."

"I have bought it."

"Oh, then you'll be quite near!" she cried jubilantly; but suddenly something made her silent and gloomy till Charles went away. But when he did, she earnestly begged him to come again.

He promised solemnly he would, and on leaving squeezed her hand with so much expression that she blushed very deeply and her eyes followed him out of sight from the window.

Boroviecki went directly to see Bucholc, but walked slowly, troubled and pondering over Müller's cordiality, and still more over Mada's. There was an agreeable picture now forming in his mind and getting more and more clearly outlined. He was sure that old Müller would not hesitate one instant to give him his daughter.

Here he almost laughed aloud at the picture of that stout red-faced German, in his cotton cloth jacket, grease-stained trousers, and old slippers, walking about those grand apartments. The man was comical, but what was that to Boroviecki?

"Mada has such natural winsomeness—and a cool million into the bargain.—What the deuce!" he muttered. "And yet——" He went on thinking and putting forward suppositions and making conjectures—but presently sent them flying at the remembrance of Anne and the letter he had received that day and not opened as yet.

"Always there is some hindrance; a man is always in bondage," he said to himself, as he walked into Bucholc's office.

His late attack once over, Bucholc had soon felt very much better. He was presently able, not only to work at his office as he had done, but also to visit the factory, aided with his stick or by a workman.

He remained on good terms with Boroviecki, although the latter had resigned his place, and they both were at odds several times a day. He had the most absolute trust in him, and felt the need of him at present, while Knoll was absent still; for the latter, when recalled on account of Bucholc's illness, had replied by wire that he should come back sooner only in case the old man died; that otherwise he could not spoil such a good business operation at any price.

Bucholc was looking over the big ledger Augustus held for him, and only just raised his eyes and nodded to Charles as he entered. Then he went on checking the various items.

Charles set silently to work, sorting the correspondence, and afterwards looked over the plans and estimates for the new machinery in the dyeing-room, which he had drawn up himself. There was no time to lose, for it would be necessary

to use the new machinery for printing the goods for next winter season.

Evening was coming on fast. Through the office windows he saw the park plunged in deepening shadows, and the bare trees began to moan in the wind; tossed about by the gusts, they looked in at the window a moment, quivered in the light, and fell back.

The work advanced with difficulty. Müller was constantly returning to his mind, and he would set aside the stiff sheets of paper with their drawings and figures, and the notes made, and fall into a reverie.

The office was still as death; only the wind was heard louder and louder in the yard, skirmishing about among the trees, striking their boughs against the walls and casements, and drumming with a dull tattoo upon the iron-plate roofs. The electric light glided quiveringly over the black bookcases, which contained, ranged in due order, those huge ledgers bearing the years they referred to on their backs in white lettering.

Bucholtz raised his eyes from the ledger, and listened to the far-away sounds of some concertina, borne by the wind from the lodgings of a worker in the factory. There were nervous twitches about his mouth; his round falcon's eyes, now redder than ever, seemed to sheathe themselves with a film. He listened long, and then said in a low voice: "It's wearisome here, eh?"

"Not more than in any other office."

"I've a queer feeling. As if I should like to hear some music. Only much louder—something uproarious. And I should like to see lots of people too."

"You could get to the theatre in time. It's only nine."

Bucholtz, without replying, laid his head back on his easy-chair, staring right in front of him. And presently there came over his features an expression of acute unrest and disquietude.

"How are you feeling to-day, Mr. President?" Charles asked after a pause.

"Oh, all right, all right!" he said in a muffled voice; and a bitter smile played about his livid mouth.

No, he was not all right. His heart was beating as regularly as usual, the pain in his legs had left him, he was able to move easily enough. Still, he knew he was not all right. There was within him, he felt, a peculiar numbness. He could not think. Every now and then the thread of his consciousness would break, and he would fall into a sort of dull lethargy. He was tired of work, of figures, of profits and losses; everything had become a matter of indifference to him. And deep below the watermark of consciousness, athwart that thick grey mist of lassitude, there shot quick gleams of indefinite longings, desires so instantaneously swift that, on the way to awareness, they were gone, leaving his brain in darkness, his heart plunged in despondent sorrow.

"This house—it is awfully empty," he said quietly, looking round the office—the ledger bookcases, the windows—at Augustus, who had been leaning against the door-post, but suddenly stood erect at attention, expecting orders.

He looked with a curiously interested gaze, as if he saw everything for the first time. Then he collapsed in his chair, quite powerless; he hung his head, breathing noisily; for his whole being was seized with a mighty, unaccountable spasm of agonizing terror. With his eyes he was yet clinging to the black figures on the white ledger paper, to the light reflected from the great bronze inkstand; he still clung to the sounds, growing weaker to him now, of the concertina, to the dull, far-off clatter in the streets. But his mind was helplessly gliding away from all those sense-frontiers of existence, and falling in a sombre awful silence.

Before ten Charles ended his work and handed over his papers, explaining every item in full detail.

"Good—very good," Bucholz murmured from time to time, though he had scarcely heard anything.

Nothing mattered to him any more. He felt more and more profoundly the desert of solitude into which he now was

entering; his depression, his helplessness, weighed down on him harder and harder, pressing him like a tightening ring.

"Why should I trouble about it? It is the cashier's business," he said to himself with complete unconcern.

Boroviecki was preparing to leave.

"Going already?"

"My work for to-day is over. Good-night, Mr. President."

They shook hands and he went away. Bucholc had intended to ask him to remain, but could not; he was too much ashamed of such childish weakness. He heard Boroviecki's footsteps die away; but he would have given very much to have him back.

"Augustus, let us go upstairs," he said, rising from his seat, and forthwith went out, unaided by the servant, who switched the lights off and locked the door.

Another footman in waiting in the hall went before them with a candle, and Bucholc slowly dragged himself up through his house, so vast, so silent, so empty!

So singularly empty did it seem that night, that the solitude it exhaled was a burden to him: and he went in to see his wife. But she was fast asleep, deep within her feather-bed, so that only part of her face, yellow as wax, was visible on the pillow. She did not wake when he entered, but the parrot, which the candlelight had roused, hopped out of its cage, and, clawing at a curtain, exclaimed dolefully: "Kundel! Kundel!"

He retired, disappointed, and went straight to his room, calling Augustus under his breath. The man stood there, awaiting orders. Bucholc gave him none, but sat down in silence in his easy-chair close to the stove, poked the dying embers with his stick, which never left him, and brooded, with a terror such as he as yet had never experienced, over the thought that he was going to be left alone.

"Close the shutters," he said at length.

They were of iron and put up within the room; and he assured himself that they had been properly closed. Then he undressed, lay down in bed, and attempted to read; but his

eyeballs were heavy as lead, and he could not move them.

"May I go now?" Augustus whispered.

"Away with you! go!" he returned angrily. But as the man was just at the door, he called to him: "Augustus!"

He came back, and stood waiting. Bucholt then slowly asked him a number of questions about his wife and children, and with such great kindness of manner that the man shrank away to a safe distance from his stick, where he answered him in fear and trembling, being astounded at such gentleness, which he had never yet known save as a prelude to blows.

Bucholt's only desire was to keep the man in his room as long as ever he could, though it was beyond him to say right out: "Augustus, stay with me!" But this singular conversation soon wearied him, and at length, with a wave of the hand, he sent him home.

And now he was all alone, and in dismay at being all alone. A strange blind dread penetrated his soul with sharp and yet sharper throes. He listened anxiously to the sounds in the street; but the street was asleep by now, and such faint sounds as passed by could not pierce the iron shutters, thickly felted on the inside.

Suddenly he sat up, leaning on his elbow and holding his breath. He clutched his revolver, and listened for a long time. He thought he heard the tread of feet approaching nearer and sounding more distinctly through the deserted rooms. But no, there was no one about; only the ticking of a clock, heard from one of the rooms, came to him with mournful reiteration.

Then the fancy seized upon him that the heavy velvet *portière* which hung over the door was bulging out unnaturally, as if a man were hidden behind it. Presently, however, he smiled at his own delusion, and laid himself down quietly, after switching off the light.

Sleep, however, was out of the question. The hours crawled by so very slowly they seemed stretching out to infinite length. He had not felt quite easy before in his bed; and now his former nervousness and fits of terror returned and

gained strength by slow degrees, till they all converged and concentrated into one great fear—the fear of death.

He was convinced he was about to die at once—saw this as an evident fact—and the awful conviction shook and bewildered him to such an extent that he started up out of bed as if to flee his doom, shuddering all over with dread, and rang the bell violently for the servant on duty, who slept downstairs.

“Go—go and bring the doctor here instantly!” he cried, his lips blue with fright.

After a time Hamerstein came in.

“Something is wrong with me; see what it is, and what’s to be done.”

The doctor, who was half asleep, made a pretty careful examination of him nevertheless, but declared there was nothing amiss, so far as he could tell.

Bucholc then explained all he had gone through.

“If you can but sleep, all these symptoms will disappear.”

“You’re a fool!” Bucholc replied fiercely; but he took a large dose of chloral—and fell asleep almost immediately afterwards.

Meanwhile Boroviecki, tired with the extra work he had been doing, had gone to take some tea in town. Roskovski’s confectionery was at that hour almost deserted, save for three people sitting under a looking-glass in the farthest room: Vysocki, David Halpern, and Meshkoski, a technical engineer employed in Baron Meyer’s factory. He came and sat down with them: for two of these he knew, and he made Meshkoski’s acquaintance directly.

David Halpern, leaning forward over the table, was thumping it with his skinny fists, and almost shrieking: “You, Mr. Meshkoski, have no idea of all that work in Lodz is producing, because you do not want to know; but I shall convince you at once by pointing to its results.”

He took out of a pocket-book several cuttings from the *Warsaw Courier*, set them before him, and read:

“‘From the 22nd to the 28th’ (listen to this!) ‘there have

been exported out of Lodz: of iron wares, 1791 poods; * of spun yarn, 11,614; of cotton stuffs, 222,825; of woollen stuffs, 103,000.' Does that tell you nothing? Did all these things create themselves? Yet I am only showing you what has been made in Lodz during this one week!"

"Oh, don't bother us*with your statistics.—Waiter! three portions of coffee.—Mr. Boroviecki, will you take some with us?"

"I am only going to read you a few figures," Halpern said. "Gentlemen, pray listen; this is Bible truth, perhaps truer. 'Importation as follows: Wool, 11,719 poods; spun yarn, 12,333; iron, 7,303; machines, 4,618; wheel-grease, 8,771; flour, 36,117; oats, 18,675; corn, 8,794; wood, 36,850; raw cotton, 126,682; and coal, 1,032,360 poods'!—Such figures speak for themselves. Here's a magnificent statement of facts for you! Lodz, to digest all that, must have a good stomach, and it requires some work to do that.—And yet you say that only fools do any work!"

"Only fools and cattle, whip-driven to their work," Meshkoski returned quietly, drinking his coffee.

"Lord, Lord! what babble is this of yours? What do you call a whip? where do you find it? Men must work. Tell me, what would a common boor do if he were not forced to work? Why, rot in idleness and die of starvation."

"Oh, be quiet. You wax frantic about the industry of Lodz. Well then, go on glorifying it, this wonderful little town of yours. Go on kissing the hands of everyone who would fain become a millionaire, and telling us that millionaires have got their millions for having worked more than anybody else."

"But those millions, they have them; where then could they have got them from, unless by their work?" Halpern said, swelling with anger.

"Because they are even more stupid than their workmen, and they get money out of sheer stupidity."

"I cannot possibly make out what you mean. Mr. Meshkoski, I respect you, and therefore say I quite fail to un-

* *Pood*—old Russian weight measure = 36 lb.—*Translator's Note.*

derstand your talk. I have hitherto never doubted that whoever works earns something; and if he works and is clever enough, he earns more; but if he works very much and is very clever, he earns millions," Halpern said, raising his voice.

"What is all this about?" inquired Boroviecki, who could not catch the gist of the matter.

"I," said Meshkoski, "assert that all millionaires—all men working to the fullest extent of their own powers and the muscles and strength of other men—are fools and idiots. Mr. David Halpern asserts the contrary. He tells us wonderful nonsense about the dignity of labour; in his holy of holies he set up a shrine for those beasts who rot on a bed made of money, and will have us admire them!"

"Truth," said Vysocki, who hitherto had been mute, "must be something of a mean between these two extremes."

"Go to—heaven with your truth and your mean!—One is either a brute or a man; there is no mean in nature between these, unless in the brains of some idiotic ideologist."

"Mr. Meshkoski, I shall force you to admit that a manufacturer—a man intending to make millions—does a hundred times more than his workman; and that he ought to be respected."

"Not a word to me about those fools who overwork themselves to make money. Speak to me rather of those creatures of God who work just as much as is needful in order to live. They are intelligent."

"Mr. Meshkoski, if you had the millions you talk about, you would speak otherwise."

"I respect you. But you must forgive me for saying offensive things, when you talk of what you don't know. Now, money—I have had it, and in abundance too; and I have sent it into the air—like that!" And he blew a cloud of smoke towards Halpern.

"Ask Kurovski; he has done the same," he went on to say. "For money I care as much as for yesterday's rain. You, Mr. Halpern, hold me for a fool. No; to earn one rouble I would not rise five minutes earlier than I care to rise. And

even to earn billions I would not sacrifice the pleasure of living my own life to the full. I would not give up my right to see the sun shine, to walk out in the fresh air, to breathe in freedom, and to think on subjects somewhat greater than millions, than love-intrigues, and all the rest of it!—I do not care to work, work, work, because I care to live, live, live! I am neither a beast of burden nor a machine; I am a man. Only a fool wants money so much that for its sake he would sacrifice everything: life, love, truth, philosophy—all the treasures of humanity. If he were so glutted with millions that he could spit them out—what good would they be?—He is, let us say, going to die, on a bed stuffed with the title-deeds of his possessions. Much that would help him! As much as if he were lying on the bare ground!—And suppose he was asked afterwards how he had lived, what would his answer be?—‘I have worked.’—‘To what end?’—‘I have made millions.’—‘What for?’—‘Why, to have them, to be admired, to ride in my carriage and make fools think me a great man!’—And to die when life is but half spent; to die with all the dignity of work, but of work done for those millions!—Out upon such foolery!”

“You have broached an important question, on which there is much to be said,” interjected Charles.

“Then say it yourselves! I’m going home.—But some other day, and at a fitting hour, Mr. Boroviecki, I’ll undertake to convince you that you are all infected with that most virulent bacillus, *Work*; it pervades the whole of human society, and (in my opinion) if you do not get rid of it soon, the whole world will come to an end far sooner than geologists expect.”

They walked out up the street, along the now empty sidewalk.

Vysocki, who had long been silent, began to speak, and in an impassioned discourse tried to show that the evil lay in the fact, not that all men work too much, but that some do not work at all. Meshkoski could make no reply, having taken his leave at once and gone home.

Boroviecki was staring with leaden eyes at the slumber-

ing street. Halpern noticed that look of his, and remarked: "You are contemplating this town of ours. You realize that Meshkoski is wrong. Should everybody do as he would have them do, where would all these palaces and houses and factories be? Lodz simply would not exist. At most would there be a picturesque bit of forest, where gentlemen could go boar-hunting."

"Well, but there's no harm in that, Mr. Halpern."

"For you, no. For Mr. Vysocki here, I cannot say. But as for myself, I need Lodz; I must have the factories, the great town and the big trade going on in it! What should I do in the country, with those louts of peasants?" he cried.

"Buy their milk and be a middleman," Boroviecki rejoined coolly, looking about him for a cab.

"Even amongst those middlemen there is so much competition in that line that they are all starving."

"Not all; only such as don't know how to cheat those they deal with."

"That's empty talk, empty anti-Semitic babble, and you don't believe it yourself. You know, the minnow is preyed on by the gudgeon, the gudgeon by the perch, the perch by the pike, the pike by man. And men also are preyed on by other men, by bankruptcies, diseases, sorrows; and Death in the end eats us all up. All this is quite in order; all's right with the world. It makes for progress!"

"I see you are acquainted with Talmudic philosophy," Vysocki put in.

"No. With the philosophy of contemplation. And I have been contemplating the world a pretty long time.—But you, Director, what's your opinion of Meshkoski?" he asked, holding Boroviecki by the hand in the act of leave-taking.

"He's a very good fellow. Very," was the non-committal answer.

"He's a genius! But he has in his brains millions that he will not take the trouble to bring out. Do you know, he made a great invention at Meyer's: a new method of bleaching cotton goods. Meyer makes fifty per cent by it; and what do you think Meshkoski gets? Next to nothing. For an inven-

tion worth millions they have given him a yearly pension of two thousand roubles! And he still goes to the factory and works on in the laboratory as he did before! I respect the man exceedingly; but when it comes to not wanting a fortune, and jeering at other people's money-making, that's beyond me. He's not quite right here." And he tapped his forehead significantly.

Charles wished them all good-night and was going, when Vysocki said: "I have a matter of business with you, but can transact it very briefly. Even before I had made your acquaintance, I had intended going to you, to make a request for a certain person."

"Employment wanted for him?"

"Yes. A poor man I know, who has been seeking work these two years."

"His specialty?"

"Formerly a landed man.—But his honesty's incorruptible."

"With those two qualifications only, he might seek for another couple of years with no other result."

"He's extremely poor. And with a large family, all simply starving."

"Such cases are common in Lodz."

"Perhaps you might help him. Any situation, no matter how poorly paid and how inferior, would be a godsend to my protégé.—Excuse me if I have presumed on so slight an acquaintance to make such a request, and so soon."

"That's no matter; but I really don't know what answer to give you. Of the better paid situations there are none free. Most of them require specialists; and for any vacancy occurring, there are scores of applicants."

"The place the most poorly paid would do.—And so—if you can——"

Boroviecki gave him his visiting-card. "Let your protégé come over to me with this to-morrow afternoon at my office. I have no situation free, but will do my best to make one for him. Though I cannot promise to succeed."

And with that they parted.

CHAPTER XIV



AVID HALPERN walked slowly down Piotrovska Street, pondering over Meshkoski, and looking around him on the town he loved with all the fervour of an enthusiast. He did not care to recall the fact that Lodz had robbed him of all his father's inheritance, that for many a year he had been living from hand to mouth, that again and again he had been compelled to take up a new business, that he was ever only on the road to that fortune which was perpetually slipping out of his grasp. All this he ascribed to ill luck, but nevertheless persisted in opening brokers' offices, shops, and agencies, always ending in bankruptcy, but never despondent. And thus he went on through life with equanimity, contemplating Lodz and the splendour thereof, dazzled by its greatness, hypnotized by the millions he saw rolling around him.

Though married, he was childless, working hard for his wife, whom he would send to Franzensbad yearly to drink the waters. As for himself, he had not stirred out of Lodz for this many a year. He cared little what he had to eat or to put on, or how he lodged. Having nothing himself, he rejoiced to think how much more and more Lodz had every day, and to gloat over the frenzied rush, the swift turnover, the roar of machinery at work, the thundering hubbub in the streets, the warehouses crammed full of wares, the new streets, the millionaires, their mills and works—all, in short, that made up the colossal Thing, now sleeping under the calm black sky, in which the moon was floating.

He loved Lodz, just as he loved its mill-owners, and its workmen, and even those simple peasants who streamed to

the town every spring: their increasing numbers told him that once again there would be more movement in Lodz, more factories, more houses.

He loved Lodz!

Did he care, he, if Lodz were ill lighted, dirty, ill paved, ill built? if houses yearly fell in ruins upon the dwellers' heads? or if in bystreets men were stabbed with knives in broad daylight?

On such trifles he never spent a thought. Neither did he think how thousands were starving there, thousands living in dire penury, thousands struggling with all their might to earn the most miserable livelihood—a struggle silent, but terrible, because never-ceasing and without any hope of victory: a struggle that carried off more worn-out victims every year than the most frightful epidemic would have done.

"All that makes for evolution, for progress!" he would say, glossing over these evils in his joy that the town had grown with such marvellous rapidity, and feeding his admiration with the enormous statistics of import and export, and with the total turnover, increasing every year by tens of millions.

Upon all the newly hatched millionaires he looked with pride, and honoured them from the very depths of his soul; it was with unfeigned rapture that he gazed from the pavement upon their magnificent equipages and residences; and he proclaimed throughout the town the sums which the little "cotton" and "half-wool kings" had lavished on the decoration of their mansions and dwelling-houses.

Such was that David Halpern who now walked down Central Street towards his lodgings, ruminating on Meshkoski. To him, a money-adorer, Meshkoski was essentially beyond all comprehension. How could anyone help taking money when it flowed by itself into his pocket? That was not in the power of his mind to grasp.

Full of these thoughts, he quietly opened a door on the third floor of a large house; but before going in, his ear had caught the faint sounds of music, which came to him wafted from the end of a dark corridor,

His wife was asleep in bed, but he had a mind to eat something; so he rummaged in a cupboard, and having found nothing but a bit of sugar, went into the kitchen to make himself a cup of tea. The samovar was cold, but he poured some tea into his cup, bit at his sugar, and drank it, pacing his tiny ante-room the while, both not to wake his wife, and to hear the music that came floating through the door.

After a time he grew tired of walking thus; so, cup in hand, he went down the passage and knocked gently at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice from the room.

He entered at his ease, made a friendly bow to the musicians, and sat down by the stove to sip his tea and listen to the music with rapt devotion.

Horn was playing the flute, Malinovski the violoncello, Shulc the clarinet, and Blumenfeld, who led the whole quintette, the first violin, while the second-violin part was taken by Vilchek. Joe Yaskulski, who sat in the next room, was busy copying a letter. All of them, except Horn, had been schoolfellows, and they met twice a week to play together.

By means of this music they unconsciously avoided the torpor induced by their grinding daily toil, for all were employed either as technicians or as office clerks. Horn, as the best off of them all (having come to Lodz only to learn business, his father being a wealthy man), had assembled them at his lodgings and bought them the instruments. But the soul of these musical festivities was young Blumenfeld, a musician both by talent and by training, for he had graduated from the Conservatory of Music. As, however, there was no living in Lodz on music alone, he had provisionally taken up work at Grosplik's bank as an accountant.

Joe Yaskulski was the youngest of them. He was not musical, but very intimate with them all, and came frequently. He was passionately fond of hearing the love-stories they told; for he dreamed of love with all the exuberance of a stripling of eighteen who had been very strictly brought up. Whilst they played, he was copying a love-letter Malinovski had given to him to read, the latter, a very good-looking young fellow, receiving a great many of the sort. It was

indeed badly spelt, but showed so much feeling that it made him flush very red every now and then and peruse the crabbed scrawl with dimmed eyes. He drank in deeply those wild outbursts of emotion, and at the same time experienced a wish, strong even to bitterness, that someone might some day love him so—or rather that he might some day get such a letter.

The music ended at last; the charwoman had brought in the samovar. Horn aided her in arranging the table, and got the glasses himself.

"Vilchek," Blumenfeld said severely, "you took C instead of D, and afterwards played an octave too low. You took a false note three times besides."

"It's no matter," Vilchek said breezily; "I soon came right again." And he walked about the room, rubbing his hands, and taking out a heavily scented handkerchief to wipe his fat round face, that was overgrown with a scanty down, of a colour as yet indistinguishable.

"Why," Horn observed, "you smell like a perfumer's shop."

"I am selling scents on commission," he said to excuse himself.

"What is it you don't trade in?" Shulc said, laughing, who, in spite of his tubby shape, was very lithe and nimble, and now poured out the tea for them all.

"Not in your blubber, Shulc, at least."

"A poor joke!" Blumenfeld muttered, sitting down to table, and brushing back his hair with a thin, nervous hand. It was very fair, and, like an aureole, surrounded his lofty and strikingly handsome forehead and his face, stamped with suffering and wearing a bitter smile.

"Mr. Halpern, won't you sit down with us?" Horn said.

"All right; I shall have warm tea to drink.—You play that piece better and better; it's so like the voice of someone weeping, weeping very mournfully—and it made me so nervous I could hardly remain in my place. A beautiful concert!"

Horn cried out: "Joseph, tea is here for you."

Joe came in, still flushed with emotion, and sat down at the end of the table to conceal what he felt after he had read the letter.

He drank his tea silently and in haste, thinking over the wonderful letter and looking now and then at Malinovski with astonishment—Malinovski, who sat taking his tea so calmly.

"Take some vodka, Vilchek, and don't look at your watch; where are you going in such a hurry? Are you on duty?" For Vilchek was at work in a railway warehouse.

"No, I have given up office work for good."

They all exclaimed together: "What! have you won in a lottery?" "Are you engaged to Miss Mendelsohn?" "Or making a bolt to America with all the railway money?"

"No, no, no! I have something better than that; a wonderfully good thing, one that will set me at once on all fours."

"On all fours?—A quadruped then—as you always have been!" said Malinovski, with a look of dislike and aversion in his green eyes.

"But never a madman, never an inventor of unrealizable things!" Vilchek replied.

"You are an ignoramus, or at most know how to cheat those you deal with. A common huckster, that's what you are! Learn this: the madness of a genius has done more for the world than all the practical cunning of fools like you; for you only know how to buy things cheap and sell them dear. Do you hear that, Vilchek?"

"I do, and shall remember it when you ask me again for credit."

"By the by," Malinovski went on, with a sudden return to serenity, "get me twenty more pounds of copper wire—same quality as last time."

Vilchek, angry as he was, took down the order in his note-book.

"Damn your quarrels and business orders!" someone growled.

"One does not prevent the other," Vilchek observed, pacing the room, rubbing his hands together vigorously, licking

his big, protruding lips, and smoothing down his rumpled hair, tumbling like a mane over his low and disagreeably puckered forehead.

"Now," said Malinovski, raising his voice, "listen, all of you; I have an important proposal to make. Joe Yaskulski is in need of a hundred roubles by to-morrow evening, and asks us all to lend them to him. He will pay it back by monthly instalments of ten roubles. The money is absolutely necessary to him. I beg you, for good-fellowship's sake, to lend it; I myself will vouch for the whole sum."

"Giving a lien on the invention you are about to make, eh?"

"Vilchek!" Malinovski shouted, stung to the quick, and striking the table. Mastering himself, he continued: "Let's make a collection for the loan"; and he laid five roubles, all he had by him, on the table. Shulc followed suit with another five; Blumenfeld gave ten.

"And I," Horn said, "will make up all that may be wanting. I have nothing to-day, but can borrow the money by to-morrow."

"Come, Vilchek! put down twenty."

"On my word of honour, I have not got so much as three by me. But Horn will give five roubles to me, and I'll return them to him."

"Clever!" someone snapped.

"Don't rely on him!—Horn, you will then lend eighty; we have twenty here. But without fail before six p. m. to-morrow."

"Without fail. Joseph, you'll come here for the money."

With tears in his eyes Joe thanked them all—all but Vilchek, who smiled superciliously and walked still faster about the room. He had the money, but never lent any.

"What do you want it for?" he asked Joe, who replied:

"Since you lend nothing, what does it matter to you?"

"My best compliments to your mother!"

Joe made no reply. He felt very sore, for he remembered well how much that very fellow was in his family's debt for services rendered. He was in a hurry to get home; he wanted

the money for his mother. A baker had offered her the management of a shop, provided she deposited a hundred roubles with him as security. That would ensure the whole family against starvation; they would have lodgings gratis, and a fixed percentage on all sales. So he hastened away to tell her, but stopped on the landing to whisper Malinovski: "Adam, let me keep that letter for a day or two; I'll take good care of it."

"Oh, you may keep it for good; I've no use for it."

Joe embraced him and rushed away.

The room was in silence for a time. Blumenfeld was tuning his violin, Horn drinking tea; Shulc looking at Malinovski, who—with the usual set smile on his face—was deeply poring over some algebraical formulæ, which he had pencilled on his napkin; while Vilchek, still striding about the room, thought upon next day's business, which was, as he expressed it, to set him "on all fours," but occasionally bestowing on his companions a listless, ironical glance, which had in it a certain pity, unmingled with any respect. At times he would sit down, breathing hard, and take off his shoes; they were fashionable articles of patent leather, but so tight that they squeezed his feet sorely. He was dressed in all the flashy exaggerated elegance of a counter-jumper.

At last he addressed Shulc, after pulling on his boot to pace the room again. "Do you know, I have happened upon a set of Kessler junior's."

"You have a special talent for ferreting out things of that sort."

"Because I've a good sight."

"It pays—a good sight does—now and then."

"Malinovski!" Vilchek screamed, but sat down again, his boots pinching him very badly.

"Oh, pray," Adam said sarcastically, "let us go on hearing you talk of your penetration and ingenuity. We shall be attentive, and your boots a little easier to wear."

"Well, yesterday, in East Street, I met a very handsome girl; so I followed, to get a better look at her, for I somehow seemed to know her face. She went into a house in Dzielna

Street, and disappeared in the yard. It was disappointing, and I was seeking the janitor to get some information, when whom did I see but young Kessler, coming in at the main entrance-passage? That looked shady; everybody knows how very fond of girls young Kessler is. I waited outside the house, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards I saw him come out, but not alone: with that girl! But she was dressed so grandly!—I hardly knew her again. They got into a carriage that was waiting a few doors away—and went off in the direction of the railway. You, Malinovski, are acquainted with her, I think?”

“How do you make that out?” he replied with apparent calm.

“Because I saw you out with her last Sunday. You were leaving one of Kessler’s workmen’s tenements, arm-in-arm with her.”

“It’s false! it cannot be—” he shouted, checking himself on the point of uttering a name.

“I am sure it is true. A brunette, as lively and as pretty as can possibly be.”

“Well, enough of this; it does not interest me,” he said carelessly, feeling all the while as if in the grip of a torturing hand that racked his inwards.

He was sure from the one detail given that this girl was his sister Sophy! No, he could not believe it, and sat petrified, longing to go out. Yet he never moved; never so much as raised his eyes to the men about him, fearing they might betray his secret. No sooner had he regained his self-possession than he put on his overcoat and withdrew without waiting for the others.

The great barrack-like buildings, in which several hundreds of people were crowded together, now dark and in silence, showed only a gleam of light from one window. Everybody slept; even the corridors that Malinovski threaded were black and empty. But his steps echoed through the house.

His mother was at home with his youngest brother, who was sitting in the kitchen, wrapped up in a shawl, stopping

his ears, and getting next day's lesson by heart with a backward and forward swing, and in a monotonous voice.

"Is it long since Father has left for the factory?" he asked, looking into the other room to see whether Sophy was there.

His mother did not answer; she was kneeling before Our Lady of Chenstohova's image. It stood on a chest of drawers, lit by a dark-red lamp. She was saying her prayers half aloud, and between her fingers the beads of a large rosary glided swiftly by.

"Where is Sophy?" He put this question in a voice that trembled with impatience.

"'. . . and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. . . . Amen.' Father went out long ago. It was yesterday Sophy went to spend a day or so at her aunt Alexandra's."

After this interruption, she went on with her beads.

Adam hesitated. He wanted to tell his mother what he suspected, but felt loath to do so, she was so absorbed in her devotions. It pained him to trouble the peace that reigned in that quiet, dusky dwelling.

For a time he sat with his eyes fixed on his mother's tired old face, and her hoary hair, red in the glow of the lamp-light, and the two vases of hyacinths in bloom, placed on each side of the sacred image, and filling the room with their strong sweet smell.

"*Rivus*, the stream—*terra*, the earth—*mensa*, the table—*nauta*, the sailor—" his brother was mumbling again and again with dull persistency, swinging his legs all the time.

"But—has Sophy really gone to visit her aunt?" he asked in a whisper.

"Didn't I tell you?—There must be some hot tea still. But if you like, I can make you some fresh tea; Joey brought water from the factory well but now. What do you say?"

Without a word Malinovski strode out, paying no attention to his mother, who called him back, and went round to Kessler's factory, where his father was mechanic in charge of the big motor.

The night porter let him in without difficulty, and he entered the great gloomy courtyard, surrounded on three sides

by vast buildings, where hundreds of windows shone bright, and whence came the continual dull whirr of the machines at work. For a month, the weaving and spinning departments had been doing double time, because of the temporary accumulation of orders.

On the fourth side, and closing the great quadrangle, there stood a tall chimney and a high turret-like building, through whose faintly lighted windows loomed the driving-wheels running at full speed. He passed the lower pavilions, at the time inactive, where there were the dyeing-room for woollen yarn, and the soap department; the fatty matters extracted from the wool, when washing, produced a sort of lye and soft soap. He walked by the big furnace, from whose red-hot mouth long streaks of light played upon the heaps of coal all round. Thence he proceeded to the tower.

Several half-naked men, black with coal grime, were sedulously bringing the coal in small trucks, while others were flinging it into the furnace. In the dim light he at first could perceive nothing but the big driving-wheel, which like some monstrous reptile, turning and whirling round and round with vertiginous velocity, and throwing forth flashes of steel, came soaring up out of the floor in which it was half buried, rushing up impetuously as if it would fly through the walls that confined it, and escape; then it disappeared again in the floor with a hiss of rage, to come up once more; running ceaselessly and at such high speed that it was impossible to discern its outlines—only a quivering mist of gleams thrown off by its polished steel surface, and forming a silvery aureole that followed the wheel and filled the dark tower with tens of thousands of bright scintillations. The trembling flame of many an oil-lamp fixed to the walls shone upon the pistons, which, like arms of steel as big as trees, were also moving, but to and fro, with a uniform and sibilant noise, and seemed trying in their impotent rage to catch at the wheel that, just as they were about to seize it, everlastingly glided out of their reach.

Malinovski saw his father moving about, an oil-can in his hand, close to the brazen barriers fixed all around the

machines, and from time to time ascertaining by means of a manometer the amount of power generated. He caught sight of his son, but first went around the motor, which he wiped in certain places; then, having ascertained how it worked, came round to him, put tobacco in his pipe, lit it, and looked inquiringly at his son.

"I have come to tell you, Father, I have reason to think that Sophy has become young Kessler's mistress."

"You fool!—Have you seen anything?"

Malinovski then related what he had heard from Vilchek. Whispering was not necessary; in that din and roar, even the sound of a cannon would not have carried far.

The old man listened attentively. His grey eyes, like the steel glints of the driving-wheel, began to glitter and to quiver ominously.

"Find out everything—everything!" he said, bending towards him his hard-bitten greyish face, clean-cut as if chiselled in stone.

"I shall.—But if it is true, we must see to his never seducing a factory girl any more! Make that impossible," he added meaningly, and from his eyes of sea-green hue there shot forth a flash of implacable hatred, and those gentle, kindly lips of his turned livid and parted, to show white fangs like a wolf's.

"The bitch!" his father hissed between his clenched teeth, as he stopped his pipe with his finger.

"What do you think of it, Father?—I have not told Mother yet."

"I will tell her myself.—Do you make sure of the fact—and I will settle with Kessler."

He again went to the big motor, and returned after a while.

"Why have you not been to see me all this week?" he asked, in tones so gentle that his great love for his son was clear.

"I was at work at the machine I am making."

The old man gave him a look from under his brows, but made no remark, though from the bottom of his soul he

detested that machine, at which Adam had been working for a year, grudging neither time nor expense.

"It is late, Adam; go to bed now. It's well you told me.—Make quite sure, and then speak to me. If things are as you suppose—then—I shall deal with Kessler *by myself*. He has millions, but I will get even with him."

He spoke coolly, with relentless calm. He was as cool as when, in the Transbaikal country, he had once made a bet to kill a Siberian bear with his ax.

They shook hands, their eyes gleaming as they met. The old man once more set to work at the motor, oiling it, cleaning it, and consulting the manometer; but sometimes he would lean back against the wall, and with his eyes on that whirlpool of flashes and shadows, that madly rotating wheel with its convulsive sibilations, he would murmur: "My Sophy!"

Adam went home, his mind somewhat relieved. As Horn was sleeping, he closed the door, and proceeded to take to pieces that machine which was sapping his life, which he had for a year worked upon without success.

It was to be a dynamo-electric motor, so easy to construct and at the same time so cheap that it would revolutionize the world—if it could but be made to work! if his calculations were not continually at fault, if there were not always something turning up to prevent success! He was evermore going to win the victory; every day he was sure of triumphing the next; but those next days lengthened out into long months, and the victory was not yet won.

He sat at work so long that Horn, waking up at early dawn, saw the light still burning, and cried: "Adam, to bed!"

"Presently," he muttered; and he then put the light out and lay down.

The grey dawn was looking in at the window, and pouring an eerie glimmer into the room—a light in which men and things looked ghostly, and the world a place of desolation. Adam looked through the casement at the fading stars, disappearing one by one in the brightness that was invading

the world. He could not sleep. Several times he rose to go over his calculations, or to peer out of the window, cooling his head in the morning air, and gliding away in thought over the thousand roofs, blackly lustrous, scarce visible in the feeble light. The town was sleeping in the absolute depth of silence.

CHAPTER XV



ORN had gone out early to speak with Borowiecki, who had nothing new to tell him; but as he went out, he met Yaskulski going to see Charles, in consequence of the latter's conversation with Vysocki the day before.

To-day Yaskulski was more agitated, more unfit for anything, than ever.

Occasionally he would draw himself up, twirl his moustache, clear his throat—but all this was inadequate to screw up his courage. He had sat down in a small room close to the dyeing department, from which he was more than once tempted to escape. But the thought of his wife and children, the remembrance of the many, many times he had fruitlessly waited in manufacturers' offices and antechambers, made him keep his seat in silent resignation.

"Are you Mr. Yaskulski?" Charles demanded.

"Yes, Mr. Director. I have the honour to introduce myself. I am Yaskulski." He spoke slowly, as he went over that set phrase, already repeated so often.

"Honour is not to the point here. Mr. Vysocki tells me you want work."

"I do," he replied curtly, crumpling his much-worn hat in his hands, and awaiting with dread the announcement that no job was to be had.

"What are you able to do? Where did you work?"

"At home."

"Had you any business?"

"I was a landed man. My land is lost; and now, in need for the time being—only for the time being—" he reiterated with a blush, "for there is a lawsuit which cannot but be

decided in our favour. The case is clear as day: after my cousin died childless——”

“I have no time for matters of family descent. You were a landowner: that means you do not know how to do anything. I wish to be of use to you; and since there has been a situation vacant in our warehouses for several days, if you are willing to accept it——”

“With thanks, Mr. Director. And most gratefully; for indeed we are just now in somewhat embarrassed circumstances. I shall never be sufficiently obliged to you, Mr. Director.—May I know what this situation is?”

“Care-taker of a warehouse. Twenty roubles a month. Duties during factory hours.”

“Good afternoon!” Yaskulski answered laconically, and turned to go.

“What’s the matter with you?” Boroviecki said in amazement.

“I am of the nobility; your proposal is insulting. Yaskulski may die of starvation, but cannot be a care-taker in the house of a German!” he said haughtily.

“Then die like a dog with your nobility. And be quick about it, to make more room in the world,” Boroviecki cried, leaving the room in a temper.

Yaskulski walked out in a state of great excitement, and went into the street. For a short time he strode proudly, with head erect, hot cheeks, and a breast full of outraged dignity. But once in the open air and under the vault of heaven, jostled by the men hurrying by, menaced by the wheels of innumerable ware-laden trucks, he soon fell back with a sigh into his former dejection; unconsciously resuming his usual stoop, he stood still upon the pavement, and sought for his handkerchief in his torn pocket. He went to lean against a fence, staring weakly and vacantly at the sea of houses and the forest of chimneys in front of him, these vomiting black smoke in voluminous clouds; at the factories, tumultuous with the roar of accelerated work seething all around; on that unceasing human energy which he saw in action and mightily creative, and which here had

found its home. And then he stared up at the quiet azure through which the sun was rolling on. He again sought for his handkerchief, but could not find his pocket; he felt his heart throbbing with the pangs of that most horrible of sufferings—the sense of utter helplessness.

An insane impulse came over him. He wanted to fling himself down by that fence, crouch there, lay his head down on the stones—and die! “Let it come to an end at last,” he thought, “this horrible struggle for life!” Let him never go back to his starving family, and let him not feel any more how absolutely incapable he was!

He no longer fumbled for that handkerchief, but put his tattered sleeve before his face, and wept.

Boroviecki had gone back to the laboratory, and was telling Murray, whom he found sitting at the table, about Yaskulski's behaviour.

“I never in all my life met such a man! I offered him such work as would keep body and soul together, and he replied indignantly: ‘I am a nobleman; I'd rather die than become care-taker to a German!’ Truly, all such nobles would be better dead, and as soon as possible.” Here he ejaculated: “But what is the matter with you?” For Murray, instead of listening, stared with a dull, woeful expression out of the window.

“I am as usual,” he returned sulkily.

“But you look so dismal!”

“I have no special reason to be merry.—By the by, would you care to buy any furniture of mine?” he continued quickly, averting his eyes.

“Furniture? are you selling any?”

“Yes, I am. I want to get rid of that rubbish. I'll sell it cheap; will you buy?”

“We may speak of that later, but if you are in need of funds, I might give you some good advice. But do be quite frank with me.”

“No, I am not in need of money; but as to the furniture, I have now no use for it.”

Charles looked keenly at him, and after a rather long

pause said, in tones full of sympathy: "So your engagement has come to nothing once more!"

"To nothing—nothing!" And he walked about the room, the less to betray his agitation.

His face was twitching, however. At times he paused to draw a deep breath, to gaze with dull eyes at Borowiecki's impassive face, to pull his coat down his hunched back, or to wipe his moist hands; then he would set off once more with great strides around the table.

Charles remained silent and absorbed in his work. But when Murray at last went out into the so-called "kitchen," he threw him a scornful glance, muttering: "A sentimental ape!"

"I but yesterday found out," Murray said, returning and pacing the room as before, "that marriage is the most immoral of all institutions. Yes! and it's a cesspool of filthy lies and meannesses and the vilest hypocrisy and deceit.—Don't tell me it is not!" he cried in a fury.

"I say nothing about it; it is no concern of mine."

"But that's what it is, and I say it!—Last night I was taking tea at a house where that ideal pair, the Kachynskis, were too. They were all the time sitting together side by side and hand in hand.—A disgusting habit, to be always pawing one another so!—They were continually whispering and gloating over each other with such greedy eyes, it was ridiculously indecent. They upset me for the whole evening. I could not believe they were what they seemed, and felt they must both be miserable humbugs.—And presently I was sure of it. After tea, I went into the next room and sat down by the window for a breath of cool air. The Kachynskis came in then and did not see me, and they began quarrelling together quite vulgarly! What it was all about I don't know, but I heard that ideal, divine, almost saintly Mrs. Kachynska blackguarding her husband in the language of the lowest street-girl; and she wound up with a slap on his face. And then he—that pattern of husbands!—caught her hand in his left, struck her three times with his right hand, and flung her against the stove, so that she rolled on the floor.

She did not faint, but went into hysterics, and had the whole household in at once. And they saw him kneeling by her, kissing her hands, calling her by the sweetest names, and weeping nearly in despair to see her suffer! Ugh! the vile sickening farce it was!"

"That's surely a very exceptional fact; but even so, it's amazing."

"It's not an exception. Nine-tenths of married couples live that way. And it must be so, while they are united for mercenary ends, so long as the law chains them in indissoluble bonds, so long as girls turn marriage into a commercial enterprise, and take a husband for the sake of lucre!"

"But your aversion to marriage has arisen out of your own personal disappointment, has it not?"

"No. I have long felt as I do—long seen through it all."

"Why don't you marry?" Charles asked him point-blank.

Murray, taken aback, did not reply at once, but rested his hot brow on the cold iron plates of the printing-machine that stood by.

"Because," he said at length, "my back is too crooked and my purse too light. Had I been blind, deaf, and cancer-eaten, but with money-bags—like Bucholc, let us say—every girl would then have been ready to promise me everlasting love—swear it on her knees! And till death," he added, with a wicked intake of his breath.

"Then," said Boroviecki, "she has refused you?"

"Yes, and she's the incarnation of stupidity, deceit, caprice, and loathsome perversity!"

"And all this rich collection of epithets is synonymous with refusal!" Boroviecki added satirically.

"Your remarks are superfluous!" Murray stormed, laying bare his thin-strewn teeth.

"So are your confidential disclosures!" Charles retorted.

At that moment a workman said, peeping into the laboratory: "The President wants you, sir."

Charles went round to Bucholc.

Murray somewhat regretted his outbreak of ill humour, of which he was ashamed; but the bitterness of his disappointment had flooded him with a sort of dull hatred for the whole world, and for women in particular. So, as he happened to hear some loud conversation and laughter in the department of dry colours, where a good many women were busy grinding them up, it was on them that he discharged his resentment, striking one and discharging the others directly. After which execution he wandered about, seeking every opportunity to make a row, and fine or expel some workman.

Bucholc was seated in the printing-chamber. When they had shaken hands, he said: "Knoll is coming on Saturday. Come upstairs to me here this evening."

"All right. But why should you leave your house, Mr. President? It may not be good for you to go out."

"I can't bear being at home: everything is so wearisome there. I need movement."

"Then why not go out somewhere for a drive?"

"I have done so to-day, and the drive was more tiresome still. What news?"

"Everything as usual."

"Good. But why is the factory so quiet to-day?" he said, listening in bewilderment.

"Why, there's as much noise as ever," Charles said, and passed to another chamber.

For a while Bucholc tried to catch the deafening, never-changing racket of the engines, spreading itself out in one vast murmur. He heard but little, however. He could not concentrate his attention, and felt the printing-chamber growing hot and close. He therefore left the factory, and sat down outside, on the brink of a pond fed by the water condensed from used-up steam. He let his half-closed eyes follow the contours of his many factories, scattered all round the big yard; the dark-hued files of wagons, laden with wool or stuffs, which were entering the yard; the warehouses, their shining roofs, the chimneys and the volumes of smoke they poured forth, rosy in the rays of the sun; and the tiny dis-

tant figures of the men at work, going to the storehouses or propelling the wagons.

Yet he could not well breathe in that air, full of sunbeams, but heavy with dust and smoke. A fit of coughing seized him, but go home he would not, for he now felt a pleasant kind of torpor steal over him.

The sun was shining then as brightly as it ever shines in the spring; a gentle wind blew from the shimmering water-drenched fields; and upon the tall leafless poplars that stood close outside the factory railings on one side, there was a troop of sparrows, clamorous, pugnacious, chirruping with joy at the coming of the spring. And Spring showed her beaming countenance far aloft and above, behind those great snowy clouds, like masses of the whitest wool, lying serene upon their background of blue, stretched out over the smoky town, the clatter of the factories, mills, and works, and the stillness of empty streets. And continually the factories played on, to the changeless tune of work.

At last Bucholz got up and went home. But he had such a sense of weakness in the presence of those enormous buildings, and the mighty machinery, and the forces of that titanic factory life, that he could scarce drag himself along, and looked round when he had reached his park with a sort of feeble jealousy of those red buildings, so strong, and glittering all over with bright windows!

His health, notwithstanding Hamerstein's wonder-working homœopathy, was not returning. No, he knew he was only getting worse; he slept but little at night, and that sometimes in his arm-chair, afraid as he was to go to bed. More and more did the thought come over him that if he lay down he should die; and the fear of death clutched and hugged and crushed him with dumb agony, and ever he dreaded night and solitude more intensely. Yet he would not confess the fact, not even to himself, but struggled against the thought with all the might of his now enfeebled will. A dull, leaden numbness now penetrated all his being. He refused to take interest in anything whatsoever, because he felt none; all things had become a weariness of the flesh to

him. At times he would sit for hours motionless in his office, leaving Boroviecki to manage everything. His gaze, bereft of expression, seemed to note only the waving of the boughs, as they swayed outside the casement; but he had forgotten where he was and what he was looking at. And again he would rouse up, and come back again to full awareness, crawl down to the factory, and come in contact with the men. He hankered after movement around him, and people, and the life to which he instinctively clung with the despair of a drowning man, catching vainly at a steep and slippery water-brink.

On Saturday—the day announced for Knoll's arrival—he felt worse than usual, but, for all that, visited the factory at noon. He was consumed with fever, and with such irresistible restlessness that he could not stay in the same place a minute; walked from pavilion to pavilion, from department to department, from storey to storey; felt himself impelled to go on—on—on! to see everything—and to get away from everything likewise. For indeed the machinery was a strain on his nerves, and the numberless transmission bands and belts, gliding along with their droning, moaning noise, were dreary and irksome to his ear.

He went then to the weaving department, and amongst the looms, with their fitful angry whirring, growling harshly like wild beasts that struggled to break loose from their chains. But the immense chambers were filled with such a clamour of looms, such a jangling, snarling, hurtling uproar, that he walked hurriedly through the room, his red and blinking lids eyeing the workmen all bent over their looms, not daring to look up, and as deaf as they were blind to all things round them. About the black quivering contours of the machines, and the workmen's all but motionless shapes, the cotton dust hovered like a tremulous greyish haze; and in the long streaks made by the sun that beamed in through the windows, it sparkled with myriads of motes.

No. It was not well for him in that place. The continual stridulous voice of the iron, working under compulsion, the overwhelming greatness of those forces with which all the

rooms were flooded as they rushed through, making the walls tremble with their rebellious clamour against the violence done to them, jarred on him strongly.

He went out and through the lower pavilions, making for the calendering department. But here again the effluvia from the soda, from the starch in solution, from the lye and the soft soap, made his eyes smart; and the monstrous jaws of those machines, vomiting endless ribbons and sheets of many-coloured stuffs, oppressed him with something like nausea.

Going farther, he looked out from one of the corridors into the yard. There stood the wagons full of cotton bales which they were bringing in to a warehouse; from other warehouses other wagons were being loaded with goods ready for sale; while just opposite the window a steam trolley was panting away, with a string of empty coal-wagons after it. He watched it disappear behind the factory, round by the forest; and then he gazed on the dark clouds of black dust in which the workmen's shapes were plunged, as they shovelled the coal from the wagons, piling it up into square stacks.

"What is all this to me?" he asked himself wearily, leaning over the window-sill to rest himself, feeling weighed down, unable to move, and very short of breath. Time and again everything went whirling round, and there was a great buzzing in his ears. This roused him to consciousness; his strength returned, and he stepped more quickly, because terror had seized him.

He felt reassured only at the sight of his people packing the goods. It was done in a large chamber, where a good many women were at work. Its centre, to the very ceiling, was piled up with rolls of printed cotton goods of various colours and patterns.

All round there arose a merry sound of talk and laughter; but no sooner had Bucholz appeared than it died away into almost complete silence. Every voice was hushed; the laughter fell dead; every eye glowed darkly; every face scowled with an uneasy scowl. Now there was only to be heard the

creaking of the machinery measuring out the lengths of the stuffs, and winding them over flat boards, or the dull thud of each separate piece as it fell into the wagons, which carried them off with a clatter to the neighbouring warehouses, and the sharp ripping sound of the paper cut to make the packages.

Bucholz passed slowly round the tables, looking steadily at the rows of plain, pallid, bloodless faces, ruined by constant grinding work. No one looked up at him; he saw only glances shot from under bent brows, that told either of enmity or of fear.

"Why are they afraid of me?" he said, and as he went out, listened a moment—and heard the room now as noisy again and as lively as before.

He walked now more slowly, with such difficulty that he decided he must return to his house; so he passed by the bleaching department, and took a short cut out through the warehouse where the ready goods were stored.

This was a one-storey building, specially constructed of stone and iron, with tiny, closely barred windows, so closely that there was always twilight in the great room, which took up a whole flat, and was crammed up to the ceiling with stacks of cloth, already cut and packed; amongst which stacks there ran deep but narrow passages, traversing the whole enormous mass. The twilight and the deep stillness which reigned in there gave this chamber an air of solemnity and of mystery. Only from time to time did a passing wagon go in by the main passage, bearing fresh pieces of goods, to vanish in the noiseless side-ways; for the sounds of the factory outside were all deadened by the cobwebs and the cotton dust on the panes, and never reached those dark deep gullies.

Bucholz could walk no longer now. He sat down close to the window on some stray pieces of percale, and meant to go out as soon as he was rested; but when he tried to rise, his legs bent under him, and he fell heavily backwards. He was, he felt, in a very bad state indeed. He wished to call out for help. He had not strength even for that; he could not so

much as utter a sound. It required an effort even to lift his eyelids and stare about him in fear upon those silent, great square bulks that stood round him with a sort of inanimate brooding and menacing solemnity.

Suddenly a wild, horrible feeling of dread seized him by the throat; he rushed like mad to the nearest window, threw himself at it, and attempted to call for help. But he could utter only a spasmodic bleat, and the desperate appeal he made was solely in his eyes, which he turned beseechingly on the workmen below, loading the coal-trucks in the yard.

No one came to him, and the factory went on surging and murmuring like some perpetually stormy sea; and he had no more strength at all. His hands slipped away from the grating, and he fell down upon the goods. With a fearful effort he rose up once more, and, stumbling over the piles of cloth that seemed rising to block the way, he collapsed a second time; and this time, instead of rising, he crawled on. He seized the air, and clutched at those stacks round him with fingers that already were ceasing to feel; he tore at the iron floor, until, with a pang as of a knife stabbing at his heart, he again clutched at the empty air, and with one horrible shriek, fell senseless on the floor.

This cry was heard; the workmen came running and stood helplessly around him in deadly fear, too terrified even to lay a finger on the body, which still was agitated by convulsive jerks.

There he lay, outstretched, with his eyes starting from their sockets, his features distorted, and his mouth open as for that last cry—his death-shriek—as grim as those piles of goods, once his; as helpless as those riches which surrounded his end. But that frightful shriek of a crushed existence, which had frozen on his lips, seemed still to resound in that dark chamber, beneath that ceiling of iron, and pass through those narrow side-ways, through the mountain of wares, through the very walls, to unite at last with the mighty waves of life, with which the town was seething and the factory roared.

CHAPTER XVI



LODZ was then dismayed by two occurrences: Bucholc's death, and the unprecedented rise in the price of cotton.

Bucholc dead!—With the speed of lightning the news flashed all through the town, and created a profound sensation. People would not believe it, shook their heads incredulously. The thing could not be!

"It's not true!" some declared with the most positive denial. That Bucholc who had always been alive, of whom they had talked those fifty years, whose every step had made men think, who had reigned absolutely over Lodz; that Bucholc whose wealth had dazzled them all; he, the power, the soul, the pride of the town! he, so cursed and so admired—dead? A kind of stupefaction came over the multitudes; they could not admit the simple fact of his death.

Concerning him thousands of legends were related in the offices, the workshops, and the factories of the town. About his life, his millions, his luck—about his iron and inflexible will, to which he forced everything and everybody to bend; about the genius (of its own kind) which he possessed—the ignorant masses understood nothing; they only saw the results, the prodigious fortune which had grown up in their sight and amongst them, while they, as before, possessed nothing.

Things quite unheard-of were told about the man. Some said he had machines to print counterfeit notes. Others, more ignorant still, and with something of peasant superstition about them yet, used to swear that the Devil was his ally; some even asserted that horns had been seen on his head, that he was the Devil himself. But no one would believe in a

natural death for him—the death which comes to all men.

Yet the news was true. Anyone who cared might go to the President's house and make sure. The great entrance-passage had been fitted up as a mortuary chapel, and hung with black stuffs strewn all over with big tears of silver. And there lay Bucholc himself, on a low catafalque, amidst palms, and flowers, and huge tapers flickering to the sounds of a dismal psalmody sung by choirs of clerics, succeeding one another incessantly. He was awaiting the day of his burial. Meanwhile he was on view to all those who were curious, and came and went away in crowds, eager to see how he looked—that legendary Bucholc, master of the lives of tens of thousands; that man of millions!

The people, hushed with awe and with an unaccountable sense of sorrow, stood in the presence of that power that was no more, who lay very quiet in his silver coffin, with his livid face, and a black crucifix in his hand.

He lay, his face looking towards the wide-open door, and seemed, with those red eyes and discoloured lids, to be gazing at the park, the factory walls, the chimneys belching forth columns of smoke; in short, at the kingdom that had been his—that universe called up out of nothingness by his will—the will of him that but now had been living to the fullest extent of his faculties, living but to hear the rumble of his machines, the whistling and the panting of his locomotives, bringing and carrying off enormous masses of raw and of ready materials of all sorts, produced by mental endeavour and the obedience of matter fettered by mind, in the huge factories of Bucholc.

Now the two Powers were face to face—the dead man and the living factory. The creator and enslaver of the forces of nature had become their slave, and from their slave was now turned into a mere worn-out tatter wrung dry to the very last drop by those same forces which he had subdued!

Knoll, arriving on Saturday, as Bucholc had announced, found him lifeless. Ordering some of his people to attend to the funeral, he at once saw to all the various affairs he had to settle.

In the house itself, an atmosphere of mourning prevailed. The whole of the floor lately occupied by him was now empty. Mrs. Bucholtz sat as heretofore all day long at her knitting; but she dropped the stitches more frequently, and looked out of the window oftener.

At times, too, those pale faded eyes of hers shone bright with tears; and then she would glide through the empty rooms, and slip downstairs to contemplate the visage of her dead husband with amazement and terror; then she would creep back yet more silently to that solitude to which she found it so hard to get accustomed, and seek consolation and oblivion in prayers, which she would repeat after her maid, who read them to her aloud. At breakfast and dinner-time she would dress more carefully, and wait for her husband's coming, as she had so many years been accustomed to do, and when he did not come, she went back to her prayers and her knitting, listening with dread to the doleful lamentations that came up from downstairs, or to the parrot, walking restlessly about the apartments, and nervously clinging to the curtains or the furniture, or calling in a raucous voice: "Kundel! Kundel!"

The funeral took place a week later; such a funeral as Lodz had never yet seen. All the great factories suspended work for the occasion; all the workmen were desired to follow the coffin to the grave. For several versts Piotrovsk Street was literally packed with people; and this immense wave of humanity in mourning carried floating upon its crest the great funeral chariot, with a canopy of interwoven palm-wreaths, under which lay a silver coffin, all covered with heaped flowers. In front of this chariot, and strongly marked on the grey background of the street and the blue of the sky, there fluttered, like many-coloured birds, but enveloped in clouds of crape, the banners of various Church fraternities and of all the associations in Lodz. A long train of priests, and several choirs, accompanied by the united bands of all the factories, were chanting the direful hymn of death, which with its sorrowful heart-rending sounds floated over the waving sea of heads, above the balconies

and casements crammed tight with spectators, up to the sun that rolled in the infinite azure.

The procession advanced but very slowly, on account of the crush, increased at every moment by new-comers from the bystreets. The family came first after the coffin. Then walked immediately afterwards the chief administrators, and the officials who managed Bucholc's numerous landed estates. And then came the workmen, divided into sections, according to their sexes and their factory occupations: weavers, spinners, calenders, dyers, cotton-printers, warehousemen, etc., with the managers and technicists and foremen at their head. And all the rest—a multitude numbering very many thousands—consisted of pretty nearly all the manufacturers in Lodz, together with their hands—the workmen in the other factories.

"It is endless!" Shaya remarked to his son and those in the carriage with him, following the funeral. He had, with knitted brows and perturbed looks, been intent on the canopy tossing above the heads of the multitudes. Time and again he would bow his head, pluck at his beard nervously, and gaze with feverish eyes on that coffin in which his rival and his enemy now lay.

Though he had many a time wished for it with fanatical hatred, this death had brought him no joy; he had no delight in the thought that now he should reign supreme in Lodz. The man had died, but his factories were there still. And, moreover, something akin to regret, a feeling of sympathy, perhaps interwoven with some thin threads of apprehension, was present in his soul. Oddly enough, he now experienced a sense of loneliness. Bucholc had died; and with him that inveterate hatred, of so many a year's duration, and envenomed by such continual struggles and rivalry. He had now no one to hate any more!

He looked into his own soul, not without amazement; he could not understand his state of mind, nor make out what had come over him.

"Bucholc is there!" he thought, with his eyes fixed upon the coffin, and a dull pain and dismay gnawing at his heart.

"Mendelsohn," Kipman asked him, "do you know the latest news of the cotton market?"

"I don't, and don't care to know. Stanislas may talk to you about that."

"But," Kipman persisted, "it's worth your while to read to-day's *Official Gazette*."

"I feel so poorly, so melancholy to-day; why do you bother me about cotton?"

"But why melancholy? Bucholc was older than you are. He's dead, and you'll live on this many a year!"

"Let me be, Kipman; these subjects are displeasing to me," he replied ill-humouredly, and again riveted his eyes on the undulating mass of heads the whole street was filled with. "Stanislas, where is Rose?"

"In the Grünspan's carriage, just after our own."

Shaya looked out of the window, and, seeing his daughter, smiled at her, but drew his head back directly to fall into a long reverie, which those with him had no mind to interrupt.

Rose was along with Mela, Vysocki, and Grünspan senior, in an open landau, with a pair of splendid jet-black horses. The girls were exchanging remarks about the crowd, and old Grünspan was expounding the state of the cotton market to Vysocki, who answered in monosyllables, being much more interested in looking at Mela, who that day looked unusually pretty and radiant.

"It's too much at a time: higher customs duties, higher railway tariffs for raw cotton, and again tariffs still higher for goods exported by rail to Russia! I tell you, all this coming on us together will play the devil with us so that half Lodz will be ruined for good. Ugh!—May I not be a prophet of evil!" And he spat with disgust.

"Then cotton has risen in price, has it?"

"Risen? You may well say so! Risen like a balloon.—Oh, the cotton will take no harm; but Lodz may well be on its last legs."

"I do not understand at all how this can be," Vysocki said,

endeavouring at the same time to follow the two girls' conversation.

"Not understand? It's clear as daylight.—A highway robber takes you by the collar and says: 'Your money! I have none, and won't work to get any.' The most iniquitous spoliation that ever was!"

"Ah, Mr. Cohn, how do you do?" he said, suddenly breaking off, holding out his hand to Leo Cohn from the carriage.

Cohn shook hands and went by with a number of young men.

"Mr. Halpern, just hear this: Bucholc has made his first 'playta,' but made a mess of it. Better luck another time. Ho, ho!" and he laughed heartily at his own joke.

"Mr. Cohn, death is no stroke of business to laugh at," Halpern replied gloomily. He was in a bad humour that day; walked with them all, but was persistently taciturn, and stooped forward to such an extent that his long-skirted coat was trodden upon. He felt so utterly unnerved that he was shaking all over, and more than once dropped the umbrella he always had by him, but would pick it up mechanically, wipe his coat-skirt, and gaze in a brown study at the faces of the millionaires gathered together for the funeral. Only when the cortège had passed into the New Market-place and turned off into Konstantynska Street, did he remark to Meshkoski, who was by his side: "Bucholc is dead, do you hear?—He had factories, millions of money, a position as high as a count's—and he's dead! And I have nothing, and have to meet a protested note to-morrow. But I am living! How good, oh how good the Lord God is!"

His voice shook with great and unbounded thankfulness; his face, gloomy till that moment, shone with profound satisfaction and the genuine delight which he felt in his own conscious existence.

"One fool the fewer, and one too many!" Meshkoski returned, and lagged behind to get alongside of Kozlovski, who, with his tall hat tilted back as usual, tapping his teeth with the top of his cane, and sporting trousers turned up as

high as his ankles, strutted along the line of slowly moving carriages, intently surveying all their feminine occupants.

"Do you know, Meshkoski, that Mendelsohn girl has no little *chic*, and there's a devil looking out of her eyes, too!"

"She's no concern of mine!—Come and have some beer: my throat is quite dry with this millionaire's parade."

"No, I'm going on to the cemetery. You see, I have noticed someone much to my taste in one of the carriages. Looked at her once—she was eyeing me. Looked at her again; she was eyeing me still."

"And you looked a third time, and she had not ceased to eye you?"

"Ah, but how she looked at me! Pitch-black, those eyes of hers; and pitch is sticky, as I well know."

"Well, good day to you. But have a care you don't get unstuck some day—with a stick! Here, you see, people don't take kindly to ogling and all that."

Leaving him, he returned to his acquaintances, trying to pick out someone he could ask to take beer with him.

"Mr. Cohn, have you heard the news about the cotton?"

"Yes, and I am thinking how on earth to make money by it, Mr. Horn!"

"Is it a fact that Bucholc has left a big sum of money for public purposes?"

"A thing to laugh at. Bucholc was not an ass."

"Ah, how are you, Welt?" Kurovski cried, meeting Moritz.

"Oh, I am getting on—as cotton is just now."

"That means you are well?"

"Superperfectly well," Moritz Welt replied, carefully articulating his words, as he shook hands with his acquaintances.

"When did you return?"

"Last night."

"Have you read about the tariffs?"

"Knew all about them three weeks ago, three weeks!"

"That's humbug; they were only published two days ago."

"What I've said I stick too."

Here someone in the crowd cried: "Silence!" Moritz had raised his voice too much.

They were quiet for a minute, and the priest's voice rose up like the tone of a question, to which there came the response of the choristers with the band; and their powerful voices, shut in between the high walls of the street, resounded in gloriously full harmony.

"What? You knew and made no profit out of it?"

"No profit? Whom do you take me for? Ask how much cotton Borowiecki and I have here in warehouse, how much at the station, and how much more is coming in from Hamburg these days, and I'll give you a few interesting figures."

"Moritz, you're too clever by half; you'll not live long!"

"Oh, I shall. Long enough to have a funeral like this one! But I say, where's Borowiecki?"

"Don't know. But he was along with us when we entered the market-place."

Moritz looked round but did not see him anywhere. He was lingering about by Lucy's carriage, which was stopped with the others in the market-place, for the crowd was too great to enter a narrow street immediately.

"Charles," Lucy whispered, "come nearer here, nearer to me."

"Will this do?" he asked, putting his head in at the carriage window.

"And will this do?" she answered, imprinting a passionate kiss on his ear.

He withdrew his head and stood leaning his shoulder against the carriage door.

"Why do they not go on?" grumbled Lucy's aunt, who accompanied her.

"Madam, I must now take leave of you."

"One instant more. Give me your hand, please." The words were said very low.

Charles darted a glance at the long line of carriages, in single file, and not yet in motion, and gave her his hand so as not to be perceived, his body concealing the movement. She swiftly caught it up to her lips, and stroked her own chin and neck with it.

"You crazy thing!" he muttered, withdrawing from the window to a respectful distance.

"I love you, Charles! Come to-day, you must. I want to tell you something of great importance," she whispered; her crimson lips, aflame, were pursed for a kiss, and her eyes shot fire.

"I will," he answered in a whisper: and then—"Till our next meeting, ladies," he said aloud.

"My husband will be here to-morrow; I hope you will not forget us."

He soon rejoined his friends and at once addressed Moritz. "Well, shall we go straight from the burial-ground to the railway?"

"The cotton arrived this morning. Have you got the money?"

"Yes, and will pay on the spot."

"When will you be out of Knoll's service?"

"I am already. We shall go to-morrow and have a good look at the buildings."

"That's right. I have engaged a mason for to-morrow, and we shall set to work at bricklaying in a few days."

"Where's Max?"

"His mother is very ill; we shall have another burial soon, I fear."

"Death has its good sides all the same," Kurovski remarked.

"As, for instance, the impartiality with which it sweeps away both useful and useless people."

"Or the hands getting a rest gratis to-day."

"Do you think so? Knoll has ordered half a day's salary to be knocked off the men's pay! Says the rest they take is an act of homage offered to the dear departed."

"That's good thrift; lessens funeral expenses. I must give an order to the same effect in my will."

"Well, Meshkoski, what are you pondering over so?"

"The foolery of all this!"

"Don't worry; it'll make no difference if you do. He's

dead; what's to be done? 'The tooth of Death hath laid its finger upon him,' as the Preacher saith."

"Do I care a fig? Bucholc is out of the running; and I"—putting his hand to his throat—"want some beer and have no one to drink with."

"Not with me at any rate; I'm off home instantly."

"I may find someone else."

They separated, each taking a different direction.

The funeral procession had now entered the narrow poplar-bordered side street that led to the cemetery. It was a mere lane, unpaved, and deep in thick black mud, which thousands walked through with bespattered feet; but full half of the crowd returned to the town on account of it.

The row of poplars was bare of leaves, weather-beaten, stripped of bark, and half killed by the deadly sewerage that ran down from the works in deep gullies. They stood, two rows of hideous crippled trees, mournfully waving their few branches with the remnant of life that was left to them, as if to display their woeful state and obtain redress from the men who passed. The procession from time to time burst forth in a grand sonorous chorus of voices, that swelled over the vast expanse of black fields drenched in water, and dotted with clumps of naked trees, huts, brick-kiln chimneys, and the shapes of a few windmills, which looked like monstrous butterflies, pinned down and fluttering their wings against the blue horizon.

Slowly the funeral train emerged from the town, proceeded along the miry road, passed the wretched, ruinous huts; and slowly did the surging human billows disappear behind the cemetery gates, and disperse amongst the pathways, lined with family vaults. But far away, amid thickets of leafless trees and black crosses, the many-coloured banners made their appearance, with long lines of people, and the flames of tapers; and above these the silver coffin, moving forwards on men's shoulders, swayed to and fro.

Silence followed, for the chants ceased, not a voice was heard, and the sounds of the band died away. There was

only the heavy crunching of passing footsteps, the tossing of trees in the wind, and the bells, tolling with a dull melancholy tone.

And then around the coffin there commenced the last comedy of death. A man, standing on an eminence, spoke pathetically of the virtues of the dead man, and of his merits; a second, in a tearful voice, bade a sorrowing farewell to him that was gone, and wept over the desolate people to whom he had been a father; a third, turning towards the coffin, spoke in the name of the family and the inconsolable friends of the dear departed; a fourth gave utterance to the feelings of the poverty-stricken multitudes around him (of those workmen driven there by threats), to whom the deceased had been a friend and a benefactor.

An ominous murmur ran through the crowd; a thousand sighs were heard, a thousand eyes shot flames, and that human sea was restless with tossing billows.

At last the obsequies came to an end. The coffin was at rest in its magnificent sepulchre, which stood enthroned on a rising ground, from which, through the gilded gratings of the door, the town was visible, wrapped in fog and smoke, and roaring the mighty hymn of Life in a thousand factories.

One after the other the bands of workmen drew near that throne and deposited their wreaths on the marble steps. It was the last act of homage from them. They slowly melted away, till the dead king of Lodz lay quite alone in the silver coffin, covered over with wreaths and garlands.

Stanley Vilchek did not wait till the end of it. When he heard the tolling of the bells, he muttered: "A merry thing it is indeed, to have so many millions and be forced to kick the bucket!" He spat disapprovingly on the ground, and left the place with Joe Yaskulski, who walked silently with him, and sighed.

"What are you whimpering about?"

"I am sorry for the man," Joe said with a shudder, and wrapped himself more closely in his wretched overcoat, made out of a student's old uniform.

"Joe, leave Baum's office. I want a confidential clerk. I'll take you up, and make a man of you."

"I can't; I must stay with Baum."

"But the man will go bankrupt one of these days. Don't be silly; I'll pay you five roubles a month more than he does."

"I can't. It's not right to forsake Baum in his trouble, and now I am almost the only man in his office."

"A fool you are! If I were as sentimental as all that, I should, like you, go barefoot and be everybody's servant all my days!"

He threw him a look of contempt, and left him near Piotrovska Street.

As he went, he thought of his other fellow students with scorn and pity. "A good-for-nothing lot! They'll rot in the factories, all of them!" Such would not be his fate, he was now quite sure of that. Not a mere servant of other men; not one of the wheels in the machine!

He walked on deliberately, in the full realization of his own powers, and his superiority and strength of mind borne in upon him by what he had done and what he meant to do. He accounted that day as the best in his life, the turning-point in his career; for that day he had done the first great stroke of business, the one which was to set him on his legs. He had purchased several acres of the land round Grünspan's factory, on two sides of it. He had bought them in secret, and was sure to sell at a profit; he knew positively that Grünspan was about to enlarge his factory, and would have to buy the land at Vilchek's price. He was really beaming with self-satisfaction. Certainly, the affair looked splendid, and his calculations could not possibly be wrong. The ground had long been for sale, and Grünspan had bargained for it this many a year, every year raising his bid by a few roubles more, but leisurely, sure that no one would purchase the ground but himself.

Now Vilchek, getting on the trail of so good an affair, had accordingly caught the owner in a net of crafty practices, friendly attentions, compulsory loans—till he became thereby

owner of the land. He had become the legal possessor of the estate that very morning. What a rage Grünspan would be in! The thought made him laugh for joy.

Holding his head proudly erect, he looked round upon the whole town as his prey, surveyed the storehouses crammed with goods, eyed the factories; and the savage greed of the serf within him swelled to gigantic proportions as he gazed upon the riches he saw. Ways and means were all the same to him. Any means were allowable provided they attained their end. Which was—to make money. He respected nothing but the law, nobody but the police. On all the rest he smiled down with mild disdain. Reputation, morality, rectitude? Bah, who cared for these things in Lodz? Who even took such nonsense into consideration?

And besides, rectitude—what was that? Had Bucholc been a man of rectitude? Who asked that? They only asked how many millions he left after him. To possess millions, grasp them in his hand, have them at his beck, and dominate with them!

He brooded thus as he walked towards the station, and his soul brimmed over with a frantic, almost agonizing desire for money, enjoyments, and masterdom over others. As a hungry dog will stare at the meat he sees, so he stared at the factories, the houses, the luxuries of the rich, the beautiful women, the palaces. An ancestral feeling was upon him—of hunger, come down to him from his forefathers, for ages downtrodden, trampled on by the mighty, driven away from the table of life's feast, overworked, underfed—and now his turn had come! He lifted up his head on high, spread out his hands like claws; he felt like a conqueror in possession, satiating his ancestors' appetites in their posterity.

"I shall get hold of everything, and be even with everybody!" he thought. And he recalled with bitterness the years of his childhood, spent in tending kine; and those when he had served in a monastery, and the beatings he had suffered; the wretchedness of all his family, the humiliations they had all undergone, the humiliation which his bene-

factors had by their assistance heaped upon him, and that which all his people had to bear. "And I shall be even with them for all that," he muttered, with this insane rancour growing up in his heart.

He had hitherto got hold only of the means to work by, had transacted business with whatever came to his hand, making money in what way soever had been possible. Manager of Grosplik's storehouses, he had meanwhile dealt besides in coal on his own account, dealt in timber, dealt in cotton remnants, dealt in eggs (which his family in the country procured for him)—in all sorts of odds and ends, in a word; and he had made trial of everything. They said he used to buy the so-called "red goods"—that is, those stolen from a factory during a conflagration; also that he had been guilty of usury, and—with Grosplik as associate—had done extremely shady things. So they said.

He knew what they said, and laughed it all to scorn. "Much I care about that!" he cried, as, passing along a side street, the memory occurred to him.

The street had fences on either side. Behind the fences rose storehouses for timber, for cement, for ironware, and lime, and coal. It had neither pavement nor side-walks, and was deep in mud, through which hundreds of heavily laden carts used to make their way. The coal storehouses extended to the left, at the foot of a high mound—a huge accumulation of railway coal, up which trucks were dragged, covered with the black grime from the coal that had been shot out there.

Vilchek lived close by, in a miserable plank-built hovel, whose flat roof was covered all over with black mud; it served him also as an office. He changed his clothes swiftly, pulled on a clean pair of long boots, and then set to work.

But he was too restless for that just then, too excited. The joy of the purchase made had got on his nerves; and then the memory of the funeral came back to him, and the rumble of the trucks piling the coal in heaps interfered with his work. So he flung his pen aside and set to pacing the office, now and then looking through his win-

dow at the pyramids of coal and at the storehouse trucks.

One of them would occasionally clatter off to be weighed, with such an earthquake of noise that everything in the hut would vibrate, and with that rattling and clattering an immense hubbub of human voices, mingled with the neighing of the horses, the thunder of the coal thrown out, and the whistles of the engines, came in through the open door, and floated into the dirty, neglected room up and down which Vilchek was striding, plunged in thought.

A workman popped his head in to report that a couple of gentlemen were waiting to see him outside, near the coal-trucks. Boroviecki and Moritz were standing close to the mounds. Vilchek, waiting for them to state their business, held out his hand to them. Moritz took and pressed it; Boroviecki feigned not to see it.

"We require several trucks, and at once."

"How many?—what for? where from? he asked curtly; Boroviecki's slight had annoyed him.

"As many as you can. For cotton. From the railway to my agency," Moritz answered.

The business was quickly transacted, and they went away.

"Ugh! a nobleman!" Vilchek grunted, in high dudgeon. Boroviecki had, on parting, put his hands in his pockets, and only nodded condescendingly. This slight he could not forget; this humiliation, too, his rancorous heart took note of. And it was all the more painful because undeserved.

But he had no time now to brood over grievances; as the day was drawing to its close, the activity in the storehouses increased exceedingly. Locomotives, constantly bringing lines of coal-laden wagons to the mounds, were crossing each other, belching forth clouds of smoke; and to the shrieks of ear-splitting whistles, and the clanking of the couplings, they forced their way on through the smoke and the dust, or, released from the load they had dragged, rushed away with a wild scream to the locomotive sheds. From the warehouses beneath, thickly coated with layers on layers of black dust, there arose multitudes of confused voices, raised in excitement, and the sounds of horses whinneying, whips cracking,

and drivers shouting, together with the racket in the street, and the vague but mighty murmur of the smoke-hidden town that lay all around.

Vilchek ran off at full speed to his office, then to the coal-trucks, and to the men bringing wares to the station. He was everywhere, splashing about in the mud until, feeling himself quite worn out, he sat down to rest on an empty car.

It was twilight, and the after-sunset glowed in the sky in purple streaks, which painted the glittering zinc roofs a blood-red hue, and crimsoned the volumes of smoke that floated above them.

Now night was coming on. A turbid gloomy greyness spread through the streets, crept along the walls, crouched about in nooks and corners, dimmed the outlines, blotted out the colours, and, swallowing up every remnant of day, wrapped the town in dark mourning weeds, amongst which lights were beginning to spring up.

And now night had fallen. The town blazed all over with bright lamps. The vague sounds grew more audible, the rumblings more distinct, the clattering louder, the clamour more thunderous; till finally all these noises joined to form a melody, savage, yet wonderfully grand, sung both by the machinery and by the men, making the air to quiver and the ground to quake. Lodz was working by night—and working with frantic energy.

"You rag of worn-out nobility, be damned—you!" Vilchek growled between clenched teeth. Borowiecki's outrage was rankling within him unforgettably, and with his chin on his fists, he looked up to the sky.

He was roused from his musings by the voice of a man passing down the street, singing some doggerel with a chorus rather like "Tra-la-la-boom-de-ay!" He went back to his office, settled all the business that remained on hand, and dispatched the last railway trucks; then he locked every door, took his supper (cooked for him by one of the workmen), and walked out into the town.

He liked going thus to and fro without aim or purpose, to feast his eyes on men and factories, to sniff and pry all

about the place, to inhale those whiffs of air saturated with coal-tar effluvia and the odours of dyes. His head was turned with the mighty greatness of Lodz; the prodigious riches hid in warehouses and factories made his eyes gleam with a greedy flame; awoke tremendous visions in his mind, and filled it to overflowing with longings, ever more intense, to rule and to revel.

That mad whirlpool of life, that river of gold that spread all over the town, intoxicated him with irresistible potency, mesmerized him, filled him with unspeakable thrills of craving; incited him to fight, to win, to plunder.

And he loved it, that Promised Land—as a beast of prey loves the illimitable wilderness, full of creatures for it to devour. He adored it, that Promised Land, flowing with—gold and blood! He hankered, lusted for it; stretched out his insatiable arms to it, crying out with the voice of victory and the voice of hunger: "Mine, mine!"

And for a while he felt that it was to be his for ever, that he would not let loose his prey till he had sucked dry its veins of gold.

CHAPTER I



IT you on the back!—Now on the chest!—Now on the head!—And once more!—And once again, my dear sir!”

“Why, Father,” old Mr. Boroviecki observed, not without vexation, “you lay about you with the cards as if they were a flail!”

“That,” Mr. Zayonchkoski put in, “reminds me of an incident that took place at the Migurskis’; district of Sieradz——”

“Flail or no flail,” the priest interrupted, his eyes twinkling with merriment, “I certainly have first-rate trumps, my dear sir. And I have a pretty little queen besides to take your king with, Zayonchkoski!”

“That remains to be seen.—But your reverence has a disagreeable knack of interrupting.—Well, as I was saying, at the Migurskis’——”

“No matter where, we have heard that anecdote a hundred times at least. Have we not, Mr. Adam?” he added, turning to old Mr. Boroviecki.

“Why, why will you always make remarks of the sort?—As I love the Lord, too much is too much!” He threw his cards down on the table, and started to his feet, much offended. “Tomek!” he cried through the open window, and his powerful bass filled the yard; “put my horse to!”

He pulled hard at his moustache, which was dyed a deep black, and snorted angrily.

“Now, now, just look at the man! What a fire-brand he is! I make him a friendly remark, and out he flies at me with a hullabaloo—as if I were a farm-hand of his!—Yasyek, my pipe is out.”

"Sit down, neighbour," said Mr. Adam Boroviecki; "Mr. Baum is about to deal."

"I won't. I am going home. I have enough of his reverence's sermons. Yesterday, at the Zavadzkis', I said a few words on the political situation; and he publicly contradicted me—jeered at me," the old gentleman said, grumbling and striding about the room.

"Because you, my dear sir, were talking absolute nonsense.—Yasyek, a light here! my pipe is out."

Here Zayonchkoski flew into a passion. "What? I talk nonsense?" he shouted, advancing upon the priest.

"That's it; nonsense," came the answer, in very gentle tones, while his reverence was puffing at a long, long pipe which a little boy was kneeling on the floor to light.

"Lord have mercy on us!" cried Zayonchkoski in high dudgeon, stretching out his arms.

"Your reverence's turn to call," said Max, pushing the cards towards him.

"Seven of spades," he called.

"Your call now, Zayonchkoski."

"Eight of clubs," he answered, coming quickly back to the table. The offence given by the priest, however, still rankled in his mind; and as he sat down, he remarked: "How can the masses have any idea of political matters, when their natural leaders are themselves so blind?"

"Eight of clubs; no trumps," said the priest.

"I accept.—Now your reverence shall see how the game will go. If you have no clubs, you shall smart for it, and soundly."

"However that may be, when Mr. Baum gets your clubs with his ace, where will you be?—Ah, my son, what did I say?—Never boast; never say *Amen* before *In sæcula sæculorum* has come, my dear sir. Ha ha!" He laughed long and loud at Zayonchkoski's discomfiture, and was so pleased that he drummed with his pipe on his cassock, and patted Max, who sat next to him, on the shoulder. "Hurrah for Lodz, hurrah for the manufacturers!" he cried; and then:

"A light here, Yasyek, you young will-o'-the-wisp! my pipe is out."

"Your reverence is quite a heathen, enjoying the misfortunes of others so!"

"Never trouble about that. You're down—and well down. —That man has been draining us dry this year; let him pay a few groschen now!"

"Twenty groschen a week was all I used to win: twenty groschen—upon my word!" Zayonchkoski said, leaning over the table to Max.

"The girls went forth for mushrooms,
For mushrooms, for mushrooms,"

old Mr. Boroviecki began to hum, beating time on the step of the arm-chair in which he sat and was carried everywhere, being paralysed on one side.

There was an interval of silence.

The candles at each corner of the green card-table shed a bright light on the field of conflict and the players' faces.

Zayonchkoski did not speak; he was still on bad terms with the parish priest, with whom he had squabbled twice a week for twenty years at least. He twirled his black-dyed moustache, and from under his great bushy eyebrows looked with peculiar disfavour at Max, who had just beaten him so badly.

The priest, whose ascetic face beamed with quaint kindness, was bending over the table. At times he would puff at his pipe and blow a cloud all round him, and would then cast a keen glance at his adversaries' hands out of his bright black eyes, though he never took advantage of what he saw.

Max played with great concentration of mind and much care, for his adversaries were first-rate players at "*préférence*"; but in the intervals of the game he would often look out of the window into which the moon was peeping, or towards the adjoining apartments, where he could hear Anne talking with Boroviecki.

Mr. Adam was continually humming some tune, beating time to it, and passing his hand through his hair, now thinning, but still luxuriant. And at every new game he would call: "First-rate cards! I'll give it you now, my boys! The king and queen and all the court besides. On to the charge! Close in to the right! Forward!" he would command with great energy and a fiery face, and slap his cards down on the table, for all the world as if he were going to attack an enemy.

"I wish you would play in a Christian fashion," the priest said. "All those tunes of yours are nothing but soldiers' songs.—Ribaldry, my dear sir.—Yasyek, a light here, my pipe's out."

"Those words 'Close in' remind me of a very curious occurrence at——"

"At the Migurskis', in the district of Sieradz. My dear sir, we have heard, we have heard that one too before."

Zayonchkoski darted a look of displeasure at the priest's smiling face. But he said nothing, only averted his face and went on playing.

Max dealt the cards out once more; but after each had called, he went round to Charles.

"Yasyek," said the priest, "do open the window, God's birds are singing so sweetly outside!"

The boy opened it, and the room was flooded with the voices of many nightingales, singing all together, and with billows of fragrance from the lilacs that blossomed just by.

In the room which Max now entered there was no lamp; only the light of the moon, gliding slowly athwart the dark-blue background of the sky.

They were sitting in silence.

"We've a fine collection of fossils there," Charles whispered to Max; for a storm had again broken the players' harmony, and Zayonchkoski was once more at the window, ordering his horses to be put to immediately, while old Mr. Boroviecki sang at the top of his voice:

"Though we're hungry and freeze,
Yet we live at our ease."

"Do they often play together?"

"Every week. At least twice a week they have some squabble, and even go off without leave-taking! But they are the very best of friends for all that!"

"But you, Miss Anne, have to reconcile them sometimes?"

"No, never! I tried once, and his reverence went very red and shouted: 'Young lady, you'll please see to the milking of the cows!' No, they can't live apart, though they must squabble when together."

"But," Max queried, "what on earth will your father do without them in Lodz?"

"That I do not know," said Charles, "nor do I know either why he wants to live in Lodz at all."

"Don't you know?" Anne ejaculated in surprise, and would have said more, but for the sound of a bell at the wicket-gate.

She returned bearing a wire for Charles. Without reading it all through, he crumpled it up in disgust and thrust it into his pocket.

She was afraid of some bad tidings, and said so.

"A stupid telegram, and nothing else." He waved his hand, vexed both by the sympathy and the curiosity she showed. The wire had been sent by Lucy!

"Do you feel very much bored here, Mr. Baum?" Anne inquired.

"I shall not say one word in answer to such a question. What I do say is that I am in admiration at the life you lead. I had never imagined that life could anywhere be so wonderfully peaceful, so wonderfully simple, and at the same time so very noble as it is here. It is only here, amongst you, that I realize how little I knew the Poles till now; only here can I account for many of Charles's good points. It's a pity you're going to Lodz!"

"But why?"

"Because I shall not be able to come here any more."

"And will you not come and see us in Lodz?" she asked, under her breath, fearing lest he might be unwilling. The

fear made her heart beat quicker, but she could not tell why.

"Many thanks. I may take this for an invitation, may I not?"

"You may. But you will first have to make me acquainted with your mother."

"I am at your orders."

"Now I have to leave you; I must see to the supper."

She went into the next room, where Yagna was laying the cloth.

Max paced the room to have a look at Anne whenever he passed by the door left ajar. He was struck by her graceful, slender figure, bending over the table; by her features, which, though not classically regular, were glowing with a peculiar fascination; and by that wide forehead which crowned them, and was itself crowned with a mass of auburn hair, smoothly parted down the middle. Her eyes, of a greyish blue, beamed bright and serene—though not without a dash of sternness—from beneath jet-black brows.

Max felt strongly interested in her; so much so that he almost thought Charles's presence unwelcome when he came in.

"I must be off to Lodz by to-morrow evening," Borowiecki said curtly.

"Why in such haste? Our working people have three holidays; we can spend Whitsuntide here accordingly."

"If you enjoy the place, please yourself by all means. I have to go."

"In that case," Max muttered, seating himself on the window-sill, "we go together."

He had felt so happy here that he was amazed at himself; and now this man wanted to tear him away! He eyed Charles with gloomy resentment.

"I have," Charles explained, "much pressing business," and he added: "besides having quite enough of the country—and a little over, too," pacing the room in a turmoil of thought. Then he walked into the room where the card-players were, and exchanged a few commonplaces with Anne;

but he could not conceal how uneasy and nervous he felt. Nor how weary.

Moreover, there was that telegram from Lucy, which he could not think of without apprehension. She had declared in the clearest possible manner that, should he not turn up on Tuesday, she would set out to seek him, were he even at the house of his betrothed! And then—come what might—it mattered not! Now he knew that Lucy, maddened with passion, would keep her word; and he had to go. This entanglement with her had grown so hateful to him, he so detested her very beauty and the love-fetters she had bound him with, that life itself had now become a burden.

Then—there was Anne. He knew he did not care for her. At times even, meeting her clear, trustful eyes, he distinctly felt dislike. Yet he was obliged to feign love; to soften the tones of his voice, when curses were in his throat, ready to fly out; and to be pleasant, soft-spoken, smiling, and attentive, as a fiancé ought to be. He had an inexpressible repugnance for such a part, yet he had to play it, for his father's sake, for hers, and also for his own: by converting Anne's dowry to his own use he had tied himself to her for ever.

"I'll marry her in double-quick time, and so make an end of it," he reflected. "Are there so few loveless marriages?"

But he raged inwardly to think that by marrying her he should inevitably rank as a nobody in the financial world. He would be compelled, if he wished to have anything of his own at all, to toil hard for years, to urge machinery and men to the very utmost—employ every means to squeeze out something for himself.—And that *now!* Now that old Müller had told him almost in as many words that he should have Mada, together with the management of the factory—a fortune of a million on the spot—a great financial opening at once, and the possibility of a far greater one in the future!

For some time already he had been disgusted with paltry and petty money-making; even the factory he was planning now seemed paltry in his eyes, though he had been working

at it all spring. He was tired of all those infinitesimal savings and scrapings, which came to only a few hundred roubles. For so many a year he had been hard at work, constantly struggling and slaving for every rouble he put by; for so many years he had crushed down all wishes and desires and cravings of every nature that his means did not permit him to satisfy; for so many a year he had longed for a broader life—a life of independence! And now, when, by marrying Mada, he might have gained all that—he was forced to take Anne, and by that very fact take upon him the yoke of mediocrity!

Against this consummation he revolted with all his might.

When Anne came to ask him in to supper, he merely glowered at her, followed without a word, and pushed his father's arm-chair into the dining-room.

The talk at supper was very lively indeed; for the priest—Father Simon—and Zayonchkoski were soon quarrelling about politics, and both the Borovieckis presently took up the cudgels in their turn. Charles jeered mercilessly at Zayonchkoski's views on the political situation; he sneered, too, at the priest's optimistic standpoint, and flatly contradicted his father by saying that political questions were not decided now by force of arms, but by "reasons of State."

"Ta-ta-ta-ta!" his father exclaimed peevishly, mimicking his son's voice. "Don't tell me! I can always show you that whoever has most artillery and soldiers is in the right. For an empire, reason is nothing but its having a big army ready to take the field. That is the soul which gives life to every State."

"No, Mr. Adam," the priest said, "the soul of an empire consists in the justice with which it is ruled."

"Empires are ruled by the stomach and its cravings," said Charles, on purpose to spite the priest, who took up the proposition and set about arguing that, as God's will is supreme, and His will is justice, all things must be founded on justice alone.

Charles held his peace for a time, not caring for such barren disputes; but when his father and Zayonchkoski besides

joined the priest in maintaining that everything must take place according to God's will, he could bear it no longer, and gave vent to his spleen: "Gentlemen, you explain the world by the Catechism. It is an easy method, I confess, and at times a clever one too."

"You are blaspheming, my dear sir; you are blaspheming God, and insulting us.—Yasyek! you young limb! a light here! my pipe is out," he cried in a voice that shook with indignation, and was so upset that his pipe clattered down upon the floor.

"Miss Anne, will you not regret leaving the paradise you have created here at Kurov?" Max was saying to Anne in a low voice. Neither of them had taken any part in the general conversation, Max feeling no interest in the questions raised, whilst Anne was considerably depressed.

Charles was changed to her; she had noticed it during these last few days. He shunned her so that she was gripped to the heart with vague uneasiness. She did not reply to the question Max had put, but sat bending over the table, and whispering with downcast eyes: "Do you know whether anything has gone wrong with Charles?"

"Why, no. Have you noticed anything?"

"He seemed to me—— But indeed I had forgotten how many worries he must have with his factory.—Yes, that's true," she added, as if speaking to herself, and resolved to stifle all her suspicions and disquietudes. She raised her head, and with eyes full of heart-felt care and solicitude gazed upon his clouded face and the supercilious glances which he darted in the direction of Father Simon.

"But what will you do with the land?" Max went on to ask.

"Grandfather wanted to sell it, but Charles was against that; for which I am very grateful to him. I have lived so much in this house that it would hurt to think it was ours no longer. Almost all the garden trees, all the quickset hedges, have been planted either by Charles's mother or by myself. Fancy, then, how hard it would be to give all this up and for ever!"

"Well, but you may purchase another estate, and a finer one, somewhere else."

"Yes, but it would not be Kurov."

Here they stopped. Another quarrel had broken out between Zayonchkoski and Father Simon, who was angrily striking the floor with his wooden pipe, and shouting: "My dear sir, I'll tell you this much: your name is Zayonchkoski—and your coat of arms—a sheepskin.—Yasyek! a light here!"

"O Lord! O Lord! Such an outrage!—Tomek, you scoundrel! get my carriage ready at once!" he roared into the kitchen, where his driver was at supper. Then out he rushed without taking leave of anyone, put on his dust-coat in the passage, and ran out. But he came back in a minute, having forgotten his cap somewhere, and looked for it in every room. Finding it, he dashed once more into the dining-room, struck a thundering blow on the table with his fist, and bawled: "You—you! Thank God your cloth protects you. Otherwise I'd teach you, I would, what comes of calling me 'Zayonchkoski with a sheepskin for coat of arms!' Oh yes, I'd teach you," he yelled, thumping again and again on the table.

"Do not spill our tea, my dear sir," Father Simon observed mildly.

"Pray sit down; why are you in such a rage? Sit down, then, do sit down," his host pleaded.

"I will not! I'll not set foot any more here, in a house where I have been insulted."

"Go, and God be with you; but do not spill our tea," the priest said, raising his tea, which was dancing up and down in his glass, in consequence of the thumping.

"You are—a—a Jesuit! As I love God you are!" Zayonchkoski screamed, and stalked out, with one last blow upon the table.

In the yard and even for some distance down the road his voice was to be heard, mingling with the clatter of the britzka as it rolled away.

"What a hare-brained fellow! Who ever heard of such a thing? To be so furious at the slightest word said!"

"Yes, but that word of yours touched him to the quick, Father."

"Why does he say silly things then?"

"Everyone has a right to his own opinion," said Mr. Adam.

"Provided," Charles drawled ironically, "provided it bears out our own."

"My dear sir! That madcap! He's really gone off!—Yasyek, you rogue, a light here," he cried indignantly, and went out on the porch to look for Zayonchkoski.

"See what a fire-brand he is! Yelled—railed at me—and ran off! The bad animal!"

"He'll come back," Anne said. "It's not the first time it has happened, nor will it be the last."

"Come back, will he? H'm, but what will Mr. Baum here be thinking of us?"

"He will be thinking," Charles replied caustically, "that you gentlemen sleep well, eat well, and have plenty of leisure, since you spend it in such childish squabbles."

The priest glared at him ominously for an instant, then smoothed his brow and smiled again; he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stuffed tobacco into it, and gave it to Yasyek to light, saying: "Your teeth hurt you, my dear sir: foul weather is at hand."

Shortly after, he took his leave and went home.

There was a long silence. Old Mr. Adam was dozing in his arm-chair. Anne was helping the servant to clear the table. Charles settled himself in a huge easy-chair, smoking cigarettes, and looking with amusement at Max, who followed each of Anne's motions with wistful eyes.

They soon afterwards went to rest. Max had his bed in a tiny parlour that looked out upon the garden.

It was a wonderful night. The songs of the nightingales were waxing ever more and more plaintive; and at last, from the thickets that grew about the river, the blackbirds began



to answer. There was nothing in the world so beautiful as the rain of sweet sounds which poured down in that quiet enchanted night of June, full of the heat striking upwards from the sun-kissed soil—of the stars twinkling in heaven—of the perfume of lilac-bushes standing in clumps all about the casements.

Max could not sleep. He opened his window and looked out upon the world wrapped in haze. He was lost in thoughts of Anne, when on a sudden he heard her voice, sounding very low.

Leaning out of the window, he could perceive her sitting by the casement of her room, which was in one of the office buildings which stood at right angles to the main pavilion.

"And why will you not tell me what makes you suffer?"

"It's nothing but overstrung nerves," another voice replied.

"Stay here a day or two more; you will calm down."

The answer was inaudible. Then the first voice spoke again, but so softly that Max could not distinguish anything; he only heard distinctly the choir of frogs croaking in the meadows, the rumble of carts passing along the highway, and the songs, ever louder, of the birds that sang.

The moon shone so bright that it covered the dewy leaves as with a crust of silver, and turned the whorls of haze into tissues of silvery gauze.

"You are romantic," said a man's voice in peevish tones.

"Am I romantic because I love you? because I feel in my heart every one of your cares so deeply—more deeply still than my own—and wish you to be perfectly happy?"

"No, no, not because of that; but because you think nothing of exposing yourself to catch cold in the night air by talking to me through the open window, provided it be by moonlight, and to the accompaniment of song-birds."

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night, Anne."

The window was slammed, and a white curtain hid the room, which now was lit. Charles had not left his window, for Max heard a match struck and could see a thin thread of

blue smoke go curling up from his room, and hover about the thatch which formed the eaves of the roof. He was smoking a cigarette.

Max lit one too, but very silently, that he might not be found out as an eavesdropper. He wondered whether Anne would return to her window, and what they would say to one another if she did. His heart was swelling with indignation against Charles.

Anne's window, however, remained closed. He could see only that her shadow appeared from time to time on the curtain, and stood by the casement; and he might have made out the sound of her footsteps but for the warbling of the nightingales and the sighing of a breeze which had sprung up somewhere near, amid forests and marshes, and came creeping in over the corn, that stood in dense dark masses, floating on through the farm-house trees, rustling and shaking the lilac shrubs, dallying with the thatched roof and caressing Max's face with its moist, warm breath, saturated with the rich odour of cornfields.

The same voice as before was heard again, saying: "Karchmarek, the man who wanted to buy our farm, will be here to-morrow."

Max had been looking into the garden, and thus missed seeing the window open.

"But Father is not selling," Charles returned.

"Perhaps you may be in want of money, though."

"Indeed I may. Of a cool million," he rejoined with dry irony.

"At any rate, Karchmarek is to rent the land; he wants a holding for his son-in-law."

"We'll talk that over to-morrow."

"Shall you take our carriage-horses to Lodz, or sell them?"

"They're not worth taking: too old for anything."

"But Grandfather is so used to them."

"He must get over it. You are always so attached to such childish fancies! Why, you might just as well transplant half the garden to Lodz, or go there with cows and poultry, geese and sucking-pigs—the whole of your live stock!"

"If you think that sneers will prevent me from taking all I cannot do without, you make a mistake."

"Pray don't forget to take your family portraits as well—those senators of the old Polish Republic. Up in the garret here where they lie, they must be longing to be in Lodz," he went on, sarcastically.

The soprano voice was mute. But a faint sound arose which to Max's ear was just like the sobbing and the bubbling of a streamlet somewhere outside the garden.

"Anne, forgive me! I did not mean to pain you. You don't know in what a state my nerves are. Anne, forgive me, and don't cry!"

Max saw Charles jump down out of his window into the garden—and two white arms stretched out to him from Anne's casement. And their heads were close together.

He would neither look nor listen any more, but closed his window and laid himself down. Sleep fled him, however. He turned, tossed, swore, smoked cigarettes, but could not fall asleep for the loud singing of the nightingales in the lilac-bushes; and he fancied he could always hear those two voices ringing in his ear.

"What can they be saying for such a long time?" he wondered with increasing irritation, and rose from his bed to ascertain whether they still were there.

Charles stood beneath Anne's window, but the talk went on in such low tones that he could not catch a word.

"A fellow can't get a wink of sleep, and all on account of these philanderers!" he grumbled, and slammed his window with a loud noise.

Nevertheless, insomnia was to be his portion all that night of June, that simmered with the full rich life of spring.

The moon, hanging opposite the windows of the house, filled his room as with a bluish dust, and poured streams of gentle brightness over the wide stretch of rippling cornfields and the translucent mists above them, that hung motionless in the air. From the meadows and the deep morasses hard by, whitish vapours came up like puffs of smoke from a burning censer, which rose in trailing wavy masses towards

the dark azure sky overhead. And in those mists, hovering over the cornfields, and in the undulating and drowsily murmuring corn, there swelled forth the quavering, incessant blatter of field-crickets, with myriads of shrill rhythmical notes, and the frogs' deep croaking uttered in response.

All these paused for a short time; but only for Max to hear choirs of other voices, sounding from the far-off morasses, from pools covered with weeds, from shiny watery mirrors, into which the rays of the moon darted like golden blades; and from the banks of tiny rivulets quite overgrown with sweet-flags or ditches full of yellow marsh-marigolds and sapphire-blue forget-me-nots, over which old decaying willows waved their heads, luxuriantly covered with a dense fell of young shoots. In every clump of lilacs the nightingales were singing; birds' voices in thousands joined their choir; and at times, from a tall larch-tree, towering above the manor, the klek-klek-klek of the stork would resound. All this mingled with the plaintive cries of lapwings from a quagmire, the twittering of swallows in their nests, the metallic rustling of the corn, the drone of beetles pursuing one another amongst the trees, the lowing of kine in their byres, and the distant whinnying of horses left in the paddocks for the night.

And sometimes the whole world would be still, and a great hush would fall over it: so deep, so immense, that one might almost hear the dew dropping from leaf to leaf, and the ripple of the brook beyond the manor seemed like the deep breathing of the earth itself!

These short moments ended, all the voices started again, and louder. Trees and grasses and all creatures would join in a thrilling hymn of love; they stretched out branches and shoots and flowers to one another, each offering itself to the other in a transport of passionate love. The whole earth, in all its voices—songs, cadences, whispers—in the veins of all plants and of all creatures whatsoever, in every twinkle or glimmer or gleam, in every one of the scents that filled the air—seemed revolving, a gigantic whirlpool that was nothing but desire for love; while, enraptured by the frenzy born of this

spring night, and by the devouring aspiration towards things everlasting, it dashed blindly on into the embrace of what opened wide before it on every side—dark, though shining with the chilly dews of the stars, suns, and planets by thousands of millions—dark, silent, mysterious, terrible!

No, Max could not sleep. The nightingale that sang under his window thrilled him so intensely that he tried to frighten it away; but the bird did not hear. Perched upon a twig that bent to and fro under its weight, it continued to pour forth its marvellous trills, shedding round it streams of perfect melody, and scattering pearly notes that rolled across the garden—a cascade of ineffable enchantment; while its female, sitting somewhere in the depths of the tree, would answer now and then with a dull drowsy twitter.

“Damn your devilish noise!” Max cried in a rage, throwing a boot of his into the bush. The bird went into another bush to go on with its song; but when Max closed the window and got into bed, it went back and sang just as before; which infuriated him so that he turned his face to the wall, wrapped his head up in the bed-clothes, and fell asleep at last, when the day was breaking.

But that night no one at the Manor of Kurov rested at all well, with the exception of old Mr. Adam.

Anne in particular had not by any means been set at ease by her long talk with her intended. On the contrary, she now began to suspect vaguely that he was concealing something from her; but never for an instant did she dream it was his indifference he concealed, or that he was trying his hardest to feign love. Being herself as passionately in love as a girl of twenty can be, such a suspicion never entered her mind.

Another cause of her sleeplessness was her waking dreams—dreams of the life in Lodz, that was to be in the near future; dreams of having to quit Kurov, where she had lived for so many a year.

“What shall I do there?” she thought, and went on thinking, thinking, thinking—till her thoughts were driven away by the noises in the farm-yard, half roused from its slum-

bers, by the cows driven out to graze and the cackling of the geese.

She got up at once.

Mr. Adam was already going to and fro in his movable arm-chair, pushed along by a lad; he moved about the yard, whistled to the pigeons that came flapping their wings over him in a noisy aerial band, snatching at the peas he was wont to throw to them every day.

"Valek! to the garden!" he ordered the lad, and flapped the pigeons away with his hat, for they came following, wheeling above and settling on his arm-chair as it moved.

"Look alive there, you sluggard!" he cried.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir!" the lad replied sleepily, pushing the vehicle into the garden amid rows of apple-trees blossoming so luxuriantly that they stood out on the green grass like gigantic hayrick-sized nosegays covered all over with rosy specks, and a cloud of rusty-brown bees flying from blossom to blossom. There were golden orioles singing in the cherry-trees; and a stork sat in her nest, clacking as loud as she could, with her neck drawn far back between her shoulders.

Anne remained in the entrance, sitting on a low stool, surrounded by a lot of poultry she was feeding. Max, in the doorway, stood contemplating the idyllic scene before his eyes.

"Tash—tash-tash-tashy!" she would call to a brood of ducklings fluttering joyfully in a tiny pool, and paying no heed to the despairing cries and cacklings of the hen that had hatched them out.

The poor mother-hen cried and clamoured for help, and rushed forward herself as far as the water, but shrank back again in terror.

"Miss Anne, do you feed all the poultry by yourself every day?"

"Every day."

"And what for?"

"Why, to fatten them up well, and get a good price for them in Lodz.—This is not very much to your taste, is it?"

"Very much indeed, for I see how admirably practical you are."

"Practical? I have to be."

"Few of us would be, unless forced. But you manage so well to combine good housewifery with things of quite another sphere—something I—I can find no name for——"

His stammering explanation was cut short at that moment. Old Mr. Boroviecki uttered a loud whistle, long drawn out. All at once the turkeys fell a-gobbling in great perturbation; the geese set up a harsh angry clamour; the mother-hens called their chickens to take shelter beneath their wings, stretching out their legs and cackling as they do when a hawk is at hand; the pigeons flew in panic to hide in the dove-cot, or fled to the stables, or (some of them) within the porch. They all raised such a din, and the uproar and confusion were so extreme, that old Mr. Boroviecki held his sides with laughter, shouting: "Oh what a trick I have played them all!"

"Here's an Idyll of the Geese, if you please! They have quite robbed me of my morning's sleep," Charles exclaimed as he came out into the porch.

"Oh, you'll sleep quite enough in Lodz."

"In Lodz I shall have other work to do," he answered impatiently; he bade Anne a somewhat frigid good-morning, and looked languidly at the blue smoke rising from the little township near by.

"Must you positively leave us to-day?" Anne hesitatingly inquired.

"Positively; and at once, if possible."

"Then let's be off; I'm ready," Max chimed in, who did not like the tone Charles was taking.

"No, no. You will leave us in the afternoon. I can't let you go at so short a notice. We must hear high mass at church, and then call on Father Simon. Then we shall take dinner, to which I have specially invited him and Mr. Zayonchkoski. Afterwards, Charles, you will have to settle the business with Kachmarek, who is to be here at three. We shall see you off before evening has come on."

"All right, all right!" Charles said, and went into the dining-room, where they all had breakfast. He then strolled out into the garden, and seated himself under an apple-tree in bloom, to be frequently rained on with showers of petals that fell at the slightest breeze.

Bees were humming in the branches as loud as in a hive, and all the garden was pervaded by the pleasant but heavy fragrance of lilacs and apple-blossoms, and the melodious lays of orioles.

Old Mr. Adam went to take a nap, as was his wont after breakfast, since he rose at dawn. Anne was dressing for church, and Max strolled about in the long grass of the avenues. He revolved round his friend in every direction, occasionally bending his steps towards the other wing of the manor, the farthest from the river; then he would come back, but not say a word to his friend as he passed him, nor would he so much as look at him. Then he would hurry away to the farther end of the garden, fancying that he saw the gleam of Anne's light-coloured dress. But it was only the flush of an apple-tree in bloom; so he came to a stand by the fence, to gaze afar at the wide plain of green growing corn, waving and murmuring monotonously, and at the narrow pathway in the middle, that ran from a village at some distance, and the long line of peasants, men and women, some in scarlet gowns, others in white capotes, all on their way to church. He looked, and at the same time listened with eager interest, hoping soon to hear the sound of Anne's voice.

What was the matter with him? He could not for the life of him guess. "Is it because I have had too little sleep?" he asked himself, as he pressed his aching forehead. "Deuce take the country!"

All at once his nerves got the upper hand of him so that he went straight to Charles. "Could we not start earlier?"

"Oh, then you too have had enough of it!"

"Indeed I am quite out of gear. I feel as if I were an old galosh, fit for the dustbin. Couldn't sleep all night, and don't know where to turn."

"Lie down upon the grass, my boy, and breathe the per-

fumes of the flowers, and listen to the murmur of the grasses in the wind; enjoy the warbling of the birds; bask in the sun at your ease—and let your fancy lightly turn at times to thoughts of—beer—or of your dark-browed Antka,” was Charles’s advice.

“I swear I don’t know what to do with myself. I have looked round the garden a score of times; well, what of it? I see it’s very lovely; the trees are all in full bloom, and the grass is very green; but what’s all that to me? I’ve been in the meadows; very beautiful and all that. Been in the stables, been everywhere, seen everything—and am fed up. Miss Anne talked of the forest. I saw the trees were big, but all was so very damp, there was no sitting down.”

“Why didn’t you tell her? She would have had a sofa dragged out there for you!”

“And then I am uneasy about Mother. And——” Here he broke off and said no more, but sulkily kicked to pieces a mole-hill that had just been thrown up amongst the grass.

“Be comforted, we shall get away; but first I must perform my spell of drudgery to perfection.”

“Drudgery?” Max asked him in surprise. “Is a visit to a father and a fiancée what you call drudgery?”

“Oh, I did not mean them, but the fools who will be here to dinner, and the calls I must pay,” Charles answered quickly, to wipe out the impression produced by his words. But Max, as if on purpose to cross him, stoutly maintained that Zayonchkoski was a very genial fellow, and Father Simon a man of great intelligence, till at last Charles eyed him in utter amazement.

“What somersaults are you cutting now? Yesterday you were lost in admiration of the country. To-day you yawn and want to be back in Lodz. Yesterday you said those two men were mere comic-opera figures; to-day you stand up for them!”

“Because I choose to!” Max cried hotly, and was making for the bottom of the garden, but came back hurriedly on hearing Anne’s voice from the porch:

“Time for church, gentlemen!”

His tired nerves, his vexation and weariness, were all forgotten in an instant, when he caught sight of Anne, who stood putting on a pair of long, white gloves.

She was exquisitely pretty that day in her cream-coloured dress, very thin, and adorned with extremely delicate mauve patterns; mauve, too, were her belt and collar, and she wore a large broad-brimmed hat, gay with forget-me-nots and white gauze. She was so strikingly handsome, and such an extraordinary fascination—youth, strength, nobility of character—flashed in her grey eyes, that Max was simply struck speechless, and had not a word to say to her.

For some time he walked on by her side. When he had to some extent recovered his self-possession, he eyed her dress with the air of an expert, and remarked gravely: "That's your 'brilliantine,' Charles; 'how admirably it colours!'"

"And it washes just as admirably," Anne continued, with a smile of amusement.

He noticed the smile, and, feeling rather annoyed, walked on a little apart, looking down the main street which led to the church of the small town.

Its inhabitants were a wretched lot of people, Jewish weavers for the most part. There was a loom at almost every window; and in the long, muddy corridors there were sitting numbers of old Jewesses, winding yarn on spinning-wheels. The dry unchanging whir of the looms sounded from every casement, making the quiet sun-bathed air to quiver. A few miserable shops were open, but with the shutters half down, as if to keep out the dust in the street.

In the centre of the main thoroughfare was a great black pool of mud, that was never quite dry, in which troops of ducks were greedily devouring such food as they found.

Opposite the monastery, in the market-place (the top of a sandy hill, crowned all about with a circle of houses sustained on wooden pillars), several dwellings had lately been burnt down; nothing of them was left but the chimney-flues, upstanding out of heaps of ruined walls. The walls, too, which had environed the monastery, had crumbled away and were overgrown with weeds and bushes of ashen-grey privet,

close to which stood large birch-trees, with pendulous boughs and white bark. The façade of the church, from which the plaster had peeled off, was thus in full view, as also the tapering belfry at the corner of the churchyard.

Just by the church and in the very shadow of those birch-trees a good many britzkas and peasants' carts stood huddled together. A little farther, in the centre of the market-place, there were a few stalls and booths, with canvas coverings. Beyond these the place was quite empty on account of the burning sun.

The new-comers remained in the churchyard; it was not possible to enter the church for the crowd. Anne seated herself on the steps which led to the vestry, and said her prayers; Max and Charles went under the shadow of the ancient birch-trees, where they sat down on one of the old tombstones, of which a goodly number lay about in rows along the walls.

The service had begun. The muffled notes of the organ came from within through the open door. Sometimes the organist lifted up his voice, sometimes a full choir was heard in solemn harmony, sometimes the priest was faintly heard chanting beyond the sea of heads which pressed about the doors; the sound surged along the sanctuary gratings and rolled back mingled with sighs and prayers. At intervals everything became still as death, the tiny bells rang out with shrill tinklings, and all in the churchyard fell upon their knees, beat their breasts, and then again resumed the places where they had sat before.

"These kerchiefs were made by us," Max whispered, pointing to some women, glowing like poppies amid the sands and in the sunlight; squatting on their hams, they were telling their beads.

"But they are faded, see!" Charles rejoined, not without malice.

"Those faded ones are not from us. I am speaking of the crimson ones with green patterns. These never fade. You may boil them in full sunlight and they'll lose no brilliancy."

"Very good; but in what way does all this concern me?"

"Good day, gentlemen," a low voice said quite close to them.

Stanley Vilchek, with his tall hat on, elegantly dressed and strongly perfumed, stood at their side, and held out his hand to them as to old acquaintances.

"Why, what are you doing here in Kurov?" Max demanded.

"Come to see my family. It's my father who's just now pounding at the organ in there," he explained with scornful blandness, playing with several rings on his fingers.

"Are you here for long?"

"Going away to-night. My Jew wouldn't give me any longer leave."

"And where are you working now?"

"At Grosplik's office, but only for the present."

"Have you thrown up the coal business?"

"Oh no. I have my bureau in Nicholas Street. You see, Grosplik has made over his 'black' business to Kopelman, and I wouldn't stay with such a scurvy rogue.—But, gentleman, have you arranged yet for your factory's coal-supplies?" he asked in a lower voice, turning to Charles.

"No, not yet," Max replied.

"State your terms," Charles said coldly.

Vilchek sat down on the tombstone by his side, wrote out some figures quickly in his note-book, and put a written estimate into his hands.

"Too dear. Brauman offers at seven and a half kopeks cheaper per bushel."

"But to make up," Vilchek insinuated, "you will get ten bushels less per truck."

"And you imagine we shall not weigh the coal when we get it, do you?"

"As to mere weight, you may even get more. But it's not for nothing that Brauman waters the coal before sending it."

"He may. But how am I to know you will not do the same?"

"Very well; I'll offer you the same terms as Brauman

does. I shall make next to nothing by this, but I am anxious to have dealings with you. I spoke of it to Mr. Welt, who told me it was you who would decide.—Well, what do you say?" he asked, in a quite friendly way, totally ignoring the former words of Charles, and his haughty, contemptuous bearing.

"Come to us to-morrow, we shall talk the matter over."

"How much coal will you require, more or less?" he asked Max, but heard no answer.

Everybody was silent now. The great bells tolled solemnly, and—to their sounds and to the chants of the whole population—the procession came out of the church, and, uncoiling itself like a long serpent having for head the crimson canopy underneath which the priest was walking, left the shadows of the great trees. As with variegated red and yellow and white scales, it gleamed with the manifold attires of the women, rendered yet more motley by the men's black, Sunday capotes and the golden flickering of the tapers; and thus it glided along between the grey church walls and the verdure of the birch-trees, environing the ancient building as with a long girdle.

A multitude of voices sounded together in the hot June air, rising to the pale-blue sky; clouds of scared pigeons flew away from the steeple and the ruined monastery roofs, and circled aloft at a great height.

The procession re-entered the holy place, the voices were no longer discernible. All that was heard was the slumberous rustling of the birch-leaves, dangling in the sultry air outside, and the cackling of geese away among the monastery buildings; the church within was still vibrating to the chants, and the organ pealing, and the tiny bells.

"Do you know Kurov well?" Max asked of Vilchek, in order to turn the talk away from business; for Charles was obstinately taciturn, and eyed Vilchek with evident dislike.

"I was born here. Here I tended my father's geese and cattle; here I got my first taste of the rod—about which Father Simon may expatiate more fully.—Do you doubt

"I ever tended cattle?" he queried ironically, seeing Max in a state of some confusion.

"Looking at you, I find that hard to believe."

"Ha ha! that's flattering. Yes, one has tended cattle, and tasted the rod, and blown the organ for Father, and cleaned the boots of the monks, and swept out, not only the church, but other places as well. I am not at all ashamed of it. It cannot be helped; facts remain facts. Besides, experience is capital laid out at compound interest."

Max was dumb. Charles looked the man superciliously up and down, with a slight curl of the lip; for he was attired with such exaggerated elegance as to be ridiculous. His glaring checked trousers, patent-leather boots, white silk waistcoat, bright-hued tie, with a very large diamond pin, cut-away in the height of fashion, lustrous stove-pipe hat, long gold watch-chain, gold eye-glasses, which he never wore, and the many costly rings he was always toying with—all this signally failed to harmonize with his tumid, pimply face, his beady, cunning little eyes, and his low, puckered forehead, above which hair of an indefinable colour covered the flat plain on the top of his head; while a long, sharp nose, thick, protruding lips, and jowl like that of an ugly dog made him resemble a poodle made up as a stork.

His companions' reticence did not trouble him at all, though at times, when he looked at the faces they made, he would smile a smile between pity and disdain. When the crowds began to disperse at the end of the service, and passed by him, he edged closer to Charles, drew up his squat, thick-set figure, and eyed with lofty unconcern his fellow villagers and friends of the pastures, who gazed upon him in astonishment, and durst not so much as salute him.

Anne then came up. He bowed very low to her. She asked him to dinner, and he flushed with joy at the invitation, but declined it in a voice loud enough to be heard by all who were then passing: "I must dine at home: all my sisters are here to-day; a family meeting—I deeply regret I am compelled to forgo so great a pleasure.—Perhaps, however, at some future time——"

"We are now going to see Father Simon," Anne said.

"I'll accompany you. I too owe him a call."

They walked slowly through the churchyard, which was still full of people. Some groups of peasants in cotton cloth capotes, wearing flat, shiny caps, and of countrywomen in gaudy kerchiefs and petticoats, bowed to them low and respectfully. But the greater part of the people consisted of factory workmen, who had come to see their families at Whitsuntide. These stood unmoved and looked defiantly on the "manufacturers," as they called them. Though Charles knew by sight a good many workmen belonging formerly to his own department at Bucholc's, not a single hat was raised to him.

To Anne, on the other hand, many a woman came, either to kiss her hand, or grasp it with expressions of the best will.

Charles followed after her; the crowds shrank away from him as he approached. Max looked on curiously. Vilchek, who came last, addressed several men condescendingly: "How do?—Getting on well?" And he grasped the hands stretched out to him, and asked about their work, their children, their health.

Nearly all bowed; they looked upon him with favour and with pride. Had not this gentleman been known to them from the times when they had fought together and tended cattle? He was one of them.

"Why, they all know you," Max cried when they entered the priest's garden.

"They do," said Anne. "Yes, the whole township loves and honours Mr. Vilchek."

"And the net result of their love," he answered, "is that my light-coloured gloves are moist and dirty and quite spoiled on account of them." So saying, he pulled them off and flung them into some bushes with a lordly air.

"He'll pick them out again, when he goes home," Charles said in a subdued voice.

But Vilchek heard him and ground his teeth with intensity of hatred for the man.

CHAPTER II



TANLEY VILCHEK stretched himself lazily and went to look out of the window. Piotrovska Street was noisy as usual. The huge trucks, laden with goods, crunched along the pavements with such force that in all the offices the glass partition walls, strengthened by brass wire network and provided with many a wicket besieged by people waiting there on business, were clanking and vibrating incessantly.

His gaze took in mechanically, now the huge scaffolding in front of a house then building opposite, now the dense masses of foot-passengers, jostling each other on the sidewalks. Then he returned to his desk, taking first of all a bird's-eye view of the many faces squeezed close together outside between the wall and the glass partition, and kept apart, group from group, by other lower railings on the far side.

He settled down to write, while the office resounded with whispered conversations and occasional bursts of laughter at jokes which passed from one table to another, but were silenced at once when the front door slammed; with telephone calls, and with the jingling of glasses of tea that was made over a gas stove in one corner of the office.

"Silence, boys; the Old Man has come," a warning voice cried.

They were all silent directly, staring at Grosplik, who had come in his carriage and was in the doorway, talking with a Jew.

"Kugelman," said Vilchek, to the man at the neighbouring table, "ask for your leave now; the Old Man is in a good humour and will grant it."

"I asked him yesterday, and he said he would see when the accounts were audited."

"Mr. Steiman, ask for gratuity to-day; now's your opportunity."

"May he die like the dog he is!" cried a voice somewhere outside the grating.

They heard the curse and laughed under their breath, but the laugh died in their throats as Grosplik entered. Heads bent in humble salutation at every wicket, and a deep silence followed, broken only by the hissing of the water over the gas stove. The porter took the great man's hat, and gently divested him of his overcoat.

He rubbed his hands, stroked his black whiskers, and spoke thus: "Do you know, gentlemen? A frightful accident has just happened!"

"But not to you, Mr. President? Lord forbid!" a voice cried anxiously.

"What can it have been?" they all exclaimed in apparent terror.

"Have we lost anything on the Stock Exchange?" the acting manager of the firm inquired, leaning over from his partition.

"Has any uninsured house been burnt down?"

"Has any relation of yours died, Mr. President?"

"Have your beautiful American horses been stolen?"

"Mr. Pelman," Grosplik said with grave rebuke, "do not say foolish things!"

"But what is it then, Mr. President? I am dying to know!" Steiman entreated.

"A fall, a terrible fall!"

"Who has fallen?—Where!—Where from?—When?—How?" The questions came quick, with ardent interest.

"From the first floor.—A comb has fallen and broke all its teeth. Ha ha!" And the Old Man laughed at the surprise he had given them.

"Oh, what a joke, what a clever joke!" And they all shouted with laughter, though they had heard the same stupid jest at least ten times every season.

"A clown's jest!" Stanley Vilchek growled.

"Oh, he can afford it; he has plenty of money!" Blumenthal answered in a whisper.

Grosglik entered his private room, situated beyond the bureau, and looking out on the yard.

It was an apartment most sumptuously fitted up. The walls, hung with red stuffs fringed with gold, were in perfect harmony with the mahogany furniture, richly decorated with bronze. A large Venetian window, curtained with heavy draperies, opened on the long courtyard, surrounded by four-storeyed factory buildings.

Grosglik looked for a while at the transmission belt that traversed the yard and was perpetually running; then at the long line of men and women pressing one after the other towards one of the doors, and bearing on their backs great bundles of woollen scarfs. They were weavers who took the woollen yarn from the factory, and wove the scarfs by hand. He then proceeded to open a cash-box built into the wall, went over its contents, and took out a bundle of papers, which he laid down on a desk near the window, having previously drawn a yellow screen before it. Then, taking a seat at the desk, he touched a bell.

At once the acting manager came in carrying a big portfolio full of papers.

"What news, Mr. Steiman?"

"Nothing to speak of.—A. Waber's house was burnt last night."

"Don't you know of anything else?" he queried, looking over the papers one after the other with extreme care.

"I'm afraid I do not, Mr. President," he replied humbly.

"You don't know much then," the banker grunted, pushing the papers aside, and touching the bell twice.

Steiman was succeeded by another clerk, the head cashier.

"Any news, Mr. Shulc?"

"A couple of workmen killed at Baluty, one had his belly ripped open."

"That's of no consequence: we shall always have plenty of that sort of goods. Anything else?"

"This morning Pinkus Meyersohn was said to be hard up."

"Yes, he intends to fail and compound with his creditors at twenty-five roubles in the hundred. Bring me his account with us."

It was brought in immediately.

The banker went through it with attention, and said with a laugh: "Let him fail, it will do us no harm. For these last six months I have known he was in deep waters and had a mind to go under."

"Yes, Mr. President, I heard you tell Steiman."

"I have a good nose for such things. I always say: 'Better comb yourself once properly than scratch your head twenty times.' Ha ha!" This he considered a witty saying, and laughed loud.

"Anything more?" he asked further.

"Nothing. Except that I think you are looking poorly to-day, Mr. President."

"You are a great fool, and I shall have to reduce your salary!" he cried, very much put out by what he heard; and when the cashier had withdrawn, he scrutinized himself in the glass, felt his plump cheeks, and put out his tongue to see what the matter was.

"I—I don't know. I must take doctor's advice," he thought, and rang three times.

Enter Blumenfeld with a sheaf of correspondence and accounts. This was the musician who had played at Horn's lodgings.

"Victor Hugo died yesterday," he gave hesitatingly as his item of news, and set to reading aloud some report or other.

"Left a large fortune?"

"Six millions of francs."

"A pretty sum. In what?"

"In three per cent *rentes françaises*, and Suez Canal shares."

"Excellent securities.—What was his business?"

"Literature. He——"

"What, literature?" Grosplik exclaimed in amazement, staring and stroking his whiskers.

"Yes, a great poet, a great writer altogether."

"A German?"

"A Frenchman."

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten; it was he who wrote *With Fire and Sword*.* My Mary read me some quite pretty passages from it."

Blumenfeld did not set him right, but read the letters, noted down the replies, gathered up the papers, and was about to leave, when the banker beckoned him to remain.

"Mr. Blumenfeld, I hear you play the piano."

"I graduated from the conservatory in Leipzig, and took the whole of Leschetizki's piano course in Vienna."

"Very glad to hear it. I like music exceedingly. Especially the grand pieces sung by Patti in Paris. I remember perfectly——" Here he set to humming modestly an air from some operetta, adapted to a barrel-organ. "I have a good ear, eh?"

"A most extraordinary one!" Blumenfeld murmured, with his eyes fixed on the banker's huge ears, tinged a livid red.

"I have had the idea of your giving lessons to my Mary. She plays well, and it will not really be giving lessons at all: you will merely sit by and see that she makes no mistakes. What do you charge per hour?"

"I am at present teaching at the Müllers'. Three roubles an hour."

"What, three roubles? But you must go to a hovel at the very end of the town, and have to talk with old Müller, a boor. With such people, what pleasure can you have? With me, you will be in a palace."

"He has a palace too."

"Well, no matter, we shall not quarrel," the banker concluded.

"When am I to come?"

"This afternoon."

* By Sienkiewicz!—*Translator's Note.*

"Very well, Mr. President."

"Send Steiman to me."

Steiman was there in a flash, awaiting his orders anxiously.

Grosglik thrust his hands into his pockets, walked about the room, twiddled his whiskers for some time, and then made the following pronouncement: "I wish to say that this continual jingling of glasses and hissing of gas in the bureau is getting on my nerves."

"We have such early hours, Mr. President, that we all must take breakfast here."

"And make your tea on the gas stove. Who pays for the gas? I do—I pay for the gas to help you gentlemen to drink tea all day long. There's no sense in that. From this day forward you shall pay for it."

"But, Mr. President, you also drink tea here."

"I do, and am going to—now, at once.—Antony, bring me some tea!" he called out to the front-door antechamber, raising his voice. "I have an idea. You go on drinking as before, you pay for the gas; it will not come in dear for so many of you; and you'll give me the tea gratis, in compensation for the gas plant used that is mine, in my office, and used during office hours."

"Very well, sir; my fellow clerks shall know of it."

"Mind, I do this for their good. At present they are ashamed to take tea; their conscience tells them it's at my expense. Now, when all pay for the gas, they will be able to look me boldly in the face. It is a highly ethical idea, Mr. Steiman, highly ethical."

"By the by, Mr. President, I was to make a request in the name of my fellow clerks."

"What? Then be quick about it; I have not much time."

"You promised us a gratuity, sir, at the close of the half-year."

"Ah, how are the accounts getting on?"

"They are working at them out of office hours, sir; all will certainly be ready in good time."

"Mr. Steiman," the banker said amicably, stopping in his walk, "pray be seated; you are tired."

"Many thanks, sir, but I must be off at once, I have so much to do."

"Oh, work will not run away, it can wait for you.—Sit down, and I'll tell you what. Are they expecting this gratuity with anything like eagerness?"

"They have deserved it by their honest work."

"You need not tell me what I know already!"

"Pray excuse me, Mr. President; I most sincerely beg your pardon," said the manager, with great humility of bearing.

"Let us talk as friends. What could I give them?"

"That is for you to decide, Mr. President."

"Well, suppose I gave them a thousand roubles. More I could not give, for I feel that the half-year will close with heavy loss."

"Yet our turnover is so far twice as big as last year's."

"Be quiet! I tell you that we have lost, and could not help losing.—Then take the round sum: one thousand roubles. How many clerks are there in this bureau?"

"Fifteen of us altogether."

"And how many in the branch office?"

"Five."

"Twenty then in all. How much would each get for himself? From thirty to fifty roubles; for we must subtract the various fines.—Now, I ask you, what good would such a sum be to anybody? Of what use could it possibly be?"

"Considering our very meagre salaries, even such a sum would be very helpful."

"You are a simpleton, and don't know how to count!" Grosplik shouted fiercely, and walked about the room with hurried steps. "We are throwing money away, Mr. Steiman, if we scatter it so. What will become of it? You shall hear. You'll put it into the lottery, I know that's your way. Perlman will buy a new suit of clothes, to make the factory girls run after him. Kugelman will get a new hat for his wife, and Shulc will be off to see a music-hall singer. Vilchek alone will not waste the money, not he! but lend it out at a good rate of interest. For all the others every kopek will have been lost.

—But what? Am I to give my money to be wasted so? No. As a good citizen, I cannot do that,” he shouted, striking his breast.

Steiman only smiled bitterly. The banker noted that smile, and cried: “What’s the good of talking? I won’t give them anything, I won’t! But with the money I’ll get a handsome set of furniture for my dining-room. You, gentlemen, will have the pleasure of saying about the town: ‘Mr. Grosplik, our head, has bought a dining-room set for a thousand roubles, and was in the right to do so!’” And he laughed sarcastically.

Steiman fixed his pale eyes upon him—eyes out of which the colour had faded, red-rimmed eyes—and he kept them fixed a long time, till the banker, vaguely troubled and uneasy, walked round the room several times, and said: “Well then, let them have that gratuity—as a token that I appreciate good work.”

He proceeded to fumble about among some papers in the safe, and at last took out a packet of yellow, faded bills of exchange, for one thousand five hundred roubles, and looked them through.

“Here you are: a thousand five hundred.”

“Wasserman and Company’s notes,” said Steiman, looking them over. “Worth just half a kopek the lot.”

“That’s a question. The firm has gone into liquidation, you know, and may even now pull through and pay a hundred per cent.”

“Even five per cent is out of the question; the creditors will not get even one.”

“Well, here are your bills, and I wish you may get a hundred and fifty per cent.”

“Thanks, Mr. President,” said Steiman mournfully, making for the door.

“Take your bills with you, man,” said Grosplik.

“There’s plenty of paper in the office.” Yet he took the bills and went out.

The banker set to work, and first of all he wrote down in

the ledger he kept in the safe, crossing off the heading "Gratuities" the sum of fifteen hundred roubles underneath as paid. That operation accomplished, he smiled to himself for some time, and caressed his whiskers.

Presently there came into his room a very elegantly dressed young Jew—tall, slender, with a pair of gold pince-nez on his high hooked nose, a red beard cut *à la* Van Dyke, hair as curly as wool and parted all the way from the crown to the nape of the neck. His olive eyes were ever restlessly wandering about from one object in the room to another. His chapped lips, purple and prominent, which he kept moistening with his tongue, curved somewhat insolently. He was Klein, a near cousin of the banker's, and in all his secrets.

He came in so noiselessly that Grosplik did not hear him enter; he surveyed the room, tossed his gloves on to an arm-chair, his hat on to another chair, and seated himself nonchalantly on an ottoman.

"How do, old fellow?" he said, lighting a cigarette.

"I am well; but how you upset me, Bronek, coming in so quietly!"

"Oh, you'll get over it!"

"Anything new?"

"A good deal; plenty of news. Fishbin to-day—well, it's all over with him."

"It'll do him good! What has he been? A man playing on ten instruments at a time—with head and elbows and knees and arms and legs! What has he got by it? One man would give him five kopeks, while the next turned him from the door."

"They say," Klein added, "that Goldberg's factory is to burn this week."

"Such a calamity is not unwelcome, even to the wealthiest man."

"Have you heard anything of Motel?"

"Let me not hear his name! A scoundrel, a robber, a maker of 'playtas,' who offers to pay thirty roubles in the hundred!"

"Ah well, people have to live somehow."

"You're a fool, Bronek! How dare you say so? I lose three thousand roubles by him."

"Just the sum he requires to marry on. Ha ha!" And he went on laughing, walking about the room and peeping into the open safe.

Grosglik caught him in the act, locked the safe at once, and said caustically: "Bronek, my safe isn't your intended, and you're ogling her as if she was! She's not for you, I give you my word; you shall never so much as kiss her, ha ha!"

What he laughed at was the doleful mien of Klein, who, though abashed, sat down by his side, and related several things to him in a confidential tone, to all which he listened most attentively.

At last, "All this," he said, "is perfectly well known to me. I must have a talk with Welt.—Mr. Blumenfeld!" (popping his head into the clerks' room) "please phone to Mr. Moritz Welt, asking him to come round on a very important matter of business.—Bronek! not a word about this. We shall eat Boroviecki raw!"

"And I say you'll not. He has on his side——"

Here he was cut short by the sudden irruption of an official, in such a state of confusion and dismay that Grosglik started from his seat.

"Mr. President, Mr. President! that blackguard Tushynski! What he has done!"

"What are you saying? And speak lower; this room isn't a synagogue."

"He cashed four hundred roubles and fled yesterday! I was at his lodgings, but he had gone—taken all his things and gone off—gone to America!"

The banker uttered a cry, and screamed with clenched fists: "Have the thief arrested—put in irons—sent to prison—sent to Siberia!"

"I meant to wire to the police; but all that costs money, and I could not act without authorization, sir."

"Money's no object! I don't mind giving all I have to

catch that thief. My four hundred roubles! Let him rot in prison for them!"

"Then, Mr. President, please open a credit at the bank for me."

"How much will it amount to?"

"I can't say, but at least some thirty or forty roubles."

"What? What? Am I to be robbed and have to pay for being robbed? Let him go scot-free to the devil!—Who gave him the order for cashing the money?"

"I did, Mr. President. But," he added in great trepidation, "it was you yourself who authorized me to do so."

"It was you who sent him; you are liable. I won't hear one word. I'm not going to lose my four hundred roubles; I'll have them out of you."

"Mr. President, I am poor—I have done nothing dishonest—for twenty years I have worked faithfully in your office; and I have eight children!—And you yourself authorized me to send that scoundrel for the money!" And with a sob and a look of despair he threw himself at the banker's feet.

"You are responsible to the account department. You should have known what sort of a man he was. I tell you once for all, the money must be forthcoming. Now go!" he cried in a fury; then he turned his back upon him, and began sipping his tea.

The clerk remained a minute, staring at the banker's broad back, at the thin thread of smoke rising from the cigar at the edge of the desk—and withdrew with a heavy sigh.

"He thinks me an idiot. He has gone shares with Tushynski. Jail-birds both of them!"

"Mr. Welt is here!"

"Show Mr. Welt in, show him in!—Bronek! go after that blockhead; tell him that—unless the money is handed over directly—to prison he goes.—Pray walk in, Mr. Welt," he cried, seeing him in the office, talking to Vilchek.

The banker and Moritz shook hands, the latter saying, with a sharp glance: "You sent for me, but I was coming by myself—on business of my own."

"If so, please let us settle it at once. My business with you is of an extremely delicate nature."

"Mine is this: Adler and Company, wanting a considerable quantity of wool, have applied to me. Now, I can get that wool, but need the money to pay cash for it."

"Good. You shall have the cash, and we go shares.—All right?"

"On the usual terms: half the profit, which is to be fifteen per cent."

"How much do you require?"

"Thirty thousand marks. On Leipzig."

"Very good; I'll wire you the amount. When are you starting?"

"To-night. Back in a week."

"That's settled then!" the banker cried in high glee, and pulling his chair away from the desk, lit a cigar and eyed Welt keenly for some minutes. He returned the look, biting the knob of his cane.

"How have you been getting on with your cotton?"

"Sold one half of it."

"I know, I know. And made seventy-five per cent profit. And what about the rest?"

"We shall spin, weave, and print it all."

"Factory building yet?"

"It will be roofed in a month; in three the machinery will be put up, and in October it will set to work."

"Quick work; I like that. Lodz-fashion, splendid!" He added, lowering his voice, and with a discreet smile: "Boroviecki is a man of great abilities—but—" Here he hesitated, and smiled an enigmatic smile, half hid in a cloud of smoke.

"But—?" Moritz repeated, curious to hear what would come.

"But he is too fond of love-affairs with married women. For a manufacturer, that is not the thing."

"He gets no harm by it. And besides, he will soon be married; he has a fiancée."

"A fiancée isn't a bill of exchange that has to be met, but

just an I O U, which can be dishonoured without bankruptcy. I like Boroviecki exceedingly; so much so that—were he but of our people—my Mary should be his bride at once. But——”

“But—?” Moritz repeated a second time, for the banker had made a long pause.

“But I am compelled to deal disagreeably by him, which pains me very much—so much that I would beg you to explain matters to him.”

“Why, what on earth—” Welt began, very ill at ease.

“In short, I am forced to withdraw the credit I had given him.” The banker said the words sadly, in the tones of a man who is sincerely grieved. He pursed up his mouth and chewed at his cigar, all the time closely watching Moritz, who made fruitless attempts to settle his glasses and suppress the agitation he felt.

The news was a thunderstroke. Speedily mastering himself, however, he said curtly, stroking his beard: “Well, we shall get credit elsewhere.”

“I know you will, and that is what makes me regret so much that I shall not be able to have any business relations with you.”

“No business relations! Why?” Welt demanded. The banker’s countenance, as much as his ambiguous words, made him feel uneasy in the highest degree.

“I cannot. My capital is tied up in such a way that it is out of the question; and besides, I have many other points to consider. I must not expose myself to any loss—or unpleasantness,” he explained; but the explanation was obscure, hesitating, fragmentary. He evidently expected Moritz would be first to question him explicitly.

Moritz, however, held his peace. He felt assured that this withdrawal of credit was the result of machinations, of secret pressure exerted on Grosplik; and he did not care to ask about anything, lest he should thereby betray the extreme importance which this act had for them.

Grosplik, who again was walking up and down the room, said in friendly and somewhat confidential tones: “Between

ourselves, and speaking quite frankly, Mr. Moritz, why should you remain in partnership with Boroviecki? Can you not start a factory on your own?"

"Got no money," he said laconically, and paused for a reply.

"That's no answer. There are those who have, and who repose great trust in you and your abilities. Why am I doing business with *you*? Why am I lending *you* thirty thousand marks at a word? Because I know you well—know that I shall make ten per cent by trusting you."

"Only seven and a half," Moritz put in quickly.

"Oh, I am not speaking of this present case, but in general. Everyone wishes to have dealings with you, and you may very soon be a made man; why, then, take risks with Boroviecki? He's long-headed; he's unrivalled in the colouring line. Yes, but he lacks caution. Why does he go about Lodz saying we must 'raise the level' of the goods produced here? A most silly thing to say! What does he mean by 'raising the level' of goods? Or by 'putting an end to shoddy textiles'?—Those are his very words, and foolish words they are," he cried, raising his voice in anger. "If his idea had been to make cheaper goods, to open new markets for our surplus wares, or to raise the rate of the percentage we gain—oh, that would have been a clever thing. But what he aims at is reforming the industry of the whole town. He'll not succeed, and may well get his neck wrung for him. For suppose he harmed no one by his doings, no one would have a word to say. If he wants to take risks, let him! If he climbs a roof, he may slip and get a tooth knocked out. What does the man want with a factory? Knoll offered him twenty thousand a year, which is a pretty income; I myself perhaps don't get so much. No; he refused. Was determined to 'raise the level of our products.' Yes, and spoil the business of Shaya, Zuker, Knoll, all the cotton-manufacturers in Lodz. And do you know why? In order that the Poles may say: 'You make shoddy stuffs, you are swindlers, you exploit the working-men, but Boroviecki does business honestly, honourably, solidly—as we do.'"

"Mr. President," Moritz observed ironically, "you see very far ahead."

"Don't laugh at me!—But I do see very far. When Kurovski set up his factory, I foresaw what would come of it, and told Glancman to set up one just like it—and do so at once, or Kurovski would ruin him. Well, he wouldn't listen to me—and where is he now? He has lost everything and is now an employee at Shaya's, for Kurovski will take none but his own people. Now Kurovski stands so firm that nobody can compete with him, and in a year's time he will be able to sell colours at his own price.—But that's not the point; the point is that, where one Pole succeeds, sixty more come in his train. You think that Travinski is not in competition with Blachman and with Kessler, do you? He is simply ruining their affairs. His game is philanthropy, and others must pay dear for what it costs him. He himself puts nothing by; every year he has to add a little more of his capital. But he spoils business for others, sells his goods cheap, and raises the salaries of both foremen and hands. Yesterday the whole spinning department of the Kesslers was at a standstill. Why? Because all the men declared they would not work for less than what Travinski's workmen got! A nice situation for a factory so bound by engagements to deliver goods at a given date that they were forced to agree to everything! If Kessler gets ten per cent less this year than last, he has Travinski to thank for that. Ugh! it is sheer piggishness; nay, worse: it's the rankest stupidity. And now here comes this Boroviecki starting up and claiming to 'raise the level of our goods'! Ha ha! I can't help laughing.—But, should he succeed, then in a couple of years we shall have a Sosnovski starting business to 'raise the level' too; and in four years there'll be eight of them, all agog to raise levels and lower prices. And in ten years all Lodz will be theirs!"

Moritz fell a-laughing at the banker's fears.

"It's no laughing matter. My supposition is not a mere bugbear; I know those men very well, and I know we cannot compete with them, for they'll have the whole of the country on their side. That's why we simply are obliged to

eat Boroviecki up, and ought all of us to understand the situation—and march together, hand in hand!”

“And the Germans, what of them?” Moritz demanded curtly, as he settled his pince-nez.

“They don’t count here. Sooner or later they will go off to the devil, but we shall remain. This, then, is our affair alone. Mr. Moritz, do you catch my meaning?”

“Quite. But if my capital brings me a larger income with Boroviecki, with Boroviecki I go,” Moritz said in an undertone, and bit the top of his cane.

“Spoken like a man of business! And I can guarantee that your capital will bring you nothing at all—and that you may lose all you have.”

“Well, I wish you a good-morning, Mr. President. Many thanks for giving me these hints.”

“I, Mr. Moritz, am a thinker. All our people are mere cattle—scurvy fellows, who only consider how to gain money on the nail, and then on Saturdays to eat a good supper and sleep their fill under a feather-bed.—What are you going to do about it?”

“I shall see.—Then you’re not giving Boroviecki even a groschen’s worth of credit?”

“I cannot possibly lose all my manufacturing people for his sake.”

“Ah, a conspiracy then?” Moritz blurted out.

“What do you mean? The idea! It’s merely a self-defence. Had it been anyone but Boroviecki, he could have been crushed easily, and have gone to pot without much ado. But you know what a godsend the fellow has been to Bucholc, and what an eye he has for colours—what a genius! Besides, many believe in him, and he has relations in the Lodz world, and is a known man on the markets.”

“All that’s true; but it means that he may weather the storm,” Moritz observed in conclusion, as he took his leave.

When in the office, he slipped past the partition to have a word with Vilchek. “Mr. Vilchek, Grünspan senior would like to confer with you as soon as may be.”

“And I can tell you what he wants to confer about. Please

say I am in no hurry to sell my land; I mean to make a farm of it."

"As you please," Moritz answered, and went out.

The thought of that conspiracy haunted him all down Piotrovskia Street. He was too bemused even to recognize Sigismund Grünspan nodding to him from his carriage, and beckoning to him.

But Sigismund jumped down and accosted Welt. "I say, Moritz, is this the way you cut your old acquaintances?"

"Ah!—But it must be only an instant. I'm pressed for time."

"All I meant to say was, come on Sunday. Mela will be coming home."

"Is she still in Florence?"

"Along with Rose; madcaps both. Rose did not care to write to Shaya, so she wired the whole of her last letter—two hundred lines!"

"They must be enjoying themselves well there."

"Rose is bored. But an Italian prince has fallen in love with Mela. He intends to follow her to Lodz."

"What for?"

"To marry her."

"What nonsense!"

"A genuine prince, my boy," Sigismund declared, unbuttoning his university coat.

"You may get as genuine a one on sale at any Italian hotel."

They separated, for Moritz was in a great hurry. He used to pay a daily visit to the factory, to see how fast the walls rose, but on this day his steps were rather slower. Grosplik's words lay heavy on his mind, and he pondered over them, though he certainly thought the banker's prophecy grossly fantastic, and never to be fulfilled.

He looked about him as he walked along: at the town, with its long lines of houses; at the great chimneys, soaring up by hundreds, red in the sunlight, like tall trunks of pines, each with a floating plume of smoke; he heard the murmurs of the streets, the muffled but incessant hum of factories at

work, the rumbling of the heavily laden lorries, passing in every direction.

He did not think of the banker's terrors any more, but the conspiracy against Boroviecki troubled him very much. It was an enterprise in which his own capital was engaged; the factory concerned him from no other point of view. The possibility of Charles's losing his all did not concern Welt, but he had a deep dislike for the smallest risk on his own account. And he now felt sure that, a conspiracy once formed against Charles, he would, as they said, "be devoured raw"!

"A rotten business!" he thought; and it was only now he began to understand the meaning of so many things that had occurred to their disadvantage.

The contractor who was to direct the bricklayers' work had withdrawn from his engagement; they had forbidden him. Cavils had been made at the plans they had submitted, and the leave to execute them had been delayed; it was their doing. The Building Commission had ordered the work to be stopped, and decreed that the walls must be of greater thickness. Information had been laid against them. The Rhenish firms had all refused to grant credit for the machines purchased. That, too, they had done. And all those falsehoods that had been spread abroad throughout Lodz, equally malicious and ridiculous, but which would certainly hinder the firm from obtaining credit, who had set them afloat? Who but the agents of Grosplik, of Shaya, of Zuker?

"The business is no good, no good in the least.—They will simply annihilate him." So thought Moritz, more and more gloomily, and when he entered the street where their factory was situated, he was already casting about for a pretext to withdraw from the whole concern. But then, some decent excuse must be found, for he did not wish to break with Charles completely.

CHAPTER III



THE remains of Meissner's factory, purchased by Boroviecki for his new works, stood near Konstantynoska Street, in one of the adjoining lanes. It was a quarter mostly of small factories and tiny workshops, now rapidly dying out, crushed by the competition of the big industries.

The lanes were crooked, lined with one-storey wide-fronted houses; they were poverty-stricken, dirty, unpaved. As to the houses, they leaned sideways with age, having slowly sunk into the soft moist earth—abashed, as it were, by the grandeur of Müller's factories, and the enormous chimneys which towered all round—a thick forest of brick and mortar.

In front of the dilapidated houses there ran the remnants of side-walks. These touched the windows where the houses had sunk deeper, and the ruts and holes in their interstices were filled up with rubbish. Along the middle of the lanes lay large quagmires, full of mud that was always liquid; and about them poor children used to gather, as wretched-looking and filthy as the vermin which came to life in those ruinous dwellings. Where there was no mud, its place was filled by coal-dust which the cart-wheels scattered about in the air in clouds that hovered over the lanes, begrimed the dwellings, destroyed every speck of verdure on the crooked, sapless trees, whose gnarled, twisted boughs bent over the fences or stretched before the houses like dry skeletons.

The harsh monotonous whir of the weavers' hand looms, whose grey angular frames oscillated behind windows no longer transparent, filled the air and mingled with the mighty roar of Müller's works.

Moritz traversed this home of a dying industry with hasty

steps; he was disgusted at the misery of those sinking houses, and irritated at the consumptive wheezing of the looms, which sounded like the rattle in the throat of a dying man.

But he loved the uproar of the huge machinery; the crashing turmoil of the factories' gigantic organisms gave him a pleasant commotion—a feeling as of strength and health; and the very sight of a factory made him glad. His face lighted up on perceiving Müller's works in full activity; he had a kindly glance for Travinski's spinning-mill hard by; he cast a long look at the red pavilions of old Baum's quiet factory opposite, whose windows, coated with dust and cobwebs, looked dull as the glassy eyes of a man just dead.

It was a little beyond Travinski's mills, and with only a few empty plots between, that Boroviecki was building, or rather transforming the buildings sold him by Meissner for next to nothing. They had stood empty for fifteen years. The whole of the front was now covered with scaffoldings, for they were raising it a storey higher. There were scaffoldings, too, in the great courtyard inside, beyond which red brick pavilions were rising, and workmen's silhouettes flitting to and fro.

"Good-morning, Mr. David," said Moritz at the sight of Halpern, who, with his umbrella under his arm and his head uplifted, stood in the centre of the quadrangle to see how the work was getting on.

"Good-morning! We shall have a fine new factory here. And how fast they build it too! It's a pleasure to see it. I am unwell, and the doctor told me to take care of myself and do no work; so I am doing nothing, nothing at all, but wandering about Lodz and seeing how it grows, for the sake of my health; and that's the best medicine for my complaint."

"Is Boroviecki in?"

"In the spinning department. I saw him there but a minute ago."

Moritz entered a low pavilion destined for the spinning department, with glazed peaked roofs. The chambers, perfectly well lighted from above, were literally crammed full

of pieces of machinery, with bricks to make foundation platforms for the plant, and noisy with men's voices and the rattle of machines which were being mounted, and whose long ribs, not unlike those of some antediluvian monster, stretched across the rooms and were all coated over with dust. The acrid smell of quicklime and the pungent odour of asphalt, ready and on the boil in one of the rooms, pervaded the air.

"Moritz, send me Yaskulski!" cried Max Baum, who, clad in a blue blouse, pipe in mouth, and smeared with tar, was standing among the men that were putting the machines together, and as hard at work as any of themselves.

Yaskulski, whom Boroviecki had from the beginning of the work taken on as an odd-job man, came in hastily.

"Hey, my nobleman! bring four stout fellows here to man the windlass—and look sharp about it!" Max shouted, and along with the other men continued putting together the machine, that was to be lifted afterwards by means of a windlass and set down on a solid brick platform. Moritz tried to address him from the middle of the room, being unable to get nearer; but he called back: "Don't bother me! You'll tell me all on Sunday. Charles has gone into the courtyard."

And there he was, standing by several great pits into which quicklime was being poured and immediately slaked. The clouds of white vapour from the creamy lime overhung them, dimming the white figures of the workers and the outlines both of men and of carts.

Boroviecki came out presently, covered all over with white dust, shook hands with Moritz, and whispered into his ear: "Do you know, they have not forwarded the dyeing-plant. Said they had none ready."

"They won't send it on credit; what are we to do?"

"I have written to England. They'll come rather late and cost a little more, but we'll have them. Those German sons of dogs!" he swore fiercely.

Moritz said no word, but eyed him with close scrutiny. Then he looked round at the whole factory, at the workers, at the pieces of machinery standing in the quadrangle under

thick awnings. He went into every hole and corner, peeped in once more to see Max, into the cement storehouse, and examined everything with particular attention. And the more he looked, the less he liked it.

"That's dough, not mortar!" he complained, seeing the foundations being laid.

"Let others prefer sand to mortar!" was Charles's reply; "I don't choose to have the whole place crashing down on my head."

"I calculated yesterday that Monier's vaulting system would cost two thousand roubles more than the other."

"But for strength it will be worth four thousand more. If a fire should happen to break out, our works would not be destroyed."

"Is that the only reason you had for introducing these vaultings?" Moritz asked in a whisper, settling his pince-nez.

"Also because, should a fire break out, it can only extend to one storey and no further."

"Bah! sometimes a fire is not—not such a calamity."

Charles did not reply; he had gone elsewhere.—Moritz walked about still for some time, vexed to see that the factory was being unexceptionably built in every part of it, and would come very dear.

In the bureau he ran his eye over the list of wages, and remarked to the manager what extravagantly large sums he considered they were. He also looked into a good many other things, all of which he found too good and too dear.

In reply to his observations, Charles only said: "I know what I am about."

"You are building, not a factory, but a palace. Besides, such luxury is too dear for us."

"This is not luxury, but simply good honest work, which always is cheaper than the other. Look at the Blohmans. They started their works on the cheap; now they are forced to make fresh repairs every year: their place is crumbling over their heads.—Now, Moritz, I'll leave you. You slept badly overnight, and are in a peevish mood."

"My money is in danger; I must see to it," was Moritz's thought, as he walked away.

Charles mounted the scaffoldings to oversee the work; then he hurried away to where the bricks were stored, and amongst the heaps of cast-up earth, and the lime-pits, and the brick-piles, and the piles of timber for building, and amongst the many carts coming in or going out. He gave directions to Yaskulski, who rushed frantically about to give satisfaction, out of breath, and with a continual look of dread upon his face. He dropped in on Max many a time; and in short was in every part of the factory, the building of which, owing to his indefatigable energy and continual presence, went forward with great rapidity. He cared about neither the dust nor the ever-increasing heat of the sun, nor even about his own weariness. At daybreak he was working with the men, and left the place with them when evening fell.

His zeal for the work was still further stimulated by Max, who took great pleasure in setting up the machinery in concert with the men, going together with them to a tavern in the evening, and drinking innumerable flagons of beer. He slept now for only a few hours, and had quite thrown off his indolent habits.

Since Max's visit to the country the relations between him and Charles had been somewhat cooler—partly because the factory now absorbed them both so completely, but also because of certain biting words which Charles had dropped at their departure from Kurov. He could not forget them, especially as he still thought of Anne, and with yet greater regard than before, and as Boroviecki's very frequent calls upon the Müllers had become more painful to him. Charles, he felt, was playing a double game, and his frank down-right nature revolted at the thought.

So they fell more and more apart; and this estrangement proceeded likewise from a certain racial and intellectual discrepancy and opposition between their minds. Charles at times realized these with a somewhat forced smile of resignation; but Max now felt them deeply, set them down as all owing to Charles, and resented them with sincere indignation.

It was almost twelve when Boroviecki left the factory, passing through the back garden, opening on another lane, in which there stood a large ground-floor house, which had been repaired in a very great hurry, for in a few weeks he was to bring Anne and his father to live there. It was there he now dwelt provisionally, occupying one room, in which he had already done changing clothes when the factory hooters sounded noon.

He perused a letter sent to him by Lucy, making an appointment with him at Helen Park in the grotto, at four p. m.

"I have enough of her!" he stormed, tearing the letter to pieces.

Yes, he had indeed enough of her. Those clandestine meetings, every time in some fresh place, were more than distasteful to him; he was weary of that very love of hers, intense though it was. He no longer cared for her at all, she took up so much time that the factory needed! Even in the times of apparent ecstasy, held in her arms with passionate kisses and embraces, and fully aware that she loved him, worshipped him, doted on him to distraction, he was seeking for some means of breaking with her—and finding to his vexation that she gave him no opportunity, no pretext for any break.

He was boarding at the Baums', the house being so near at hand; but this time he did not repass through the garden and his own buildings, but into the other street, where the Müllers' mansion stood. There, on passing the tiny house in which they made their dwelling, he slackened his pace, and gave a glance at the windows.

It was just so. Mada's bright face peeped, first from one window, then from another, and finally her figure appeared in the porch which formed a sort of recess.

"Are you going to your dinner?" she asked merrily, raising her china-blue eyes to his.

"I am. And you, have you not dined yet?" he said, holding out his hand.

"Not yet. Wait, I must wipe my hand first.—I have been

cooking the dinner by myself," she said with a laugh, wiping her hands on her long, blue apron.

"So you have the kitchen in the parlour now!" he remarked with a spice of malice.

"Oh, I was putting things in order there," she faltered, blushing for shame to think he might have guessed she had been awaiting him at the parlour window.

"Where did you get blackened so?" she inquired, when calm again.

"Where am I blackened?"

"Under your eyes, here. I shall wipe it off, though—if you'll let me," she said, with timid pleading.

"If you please."

She carefully wiped away the black speck with her handkerchief.

"Perhaps my temple here is blackened and grimy too," he said, rather amused by her, and pointing to it.

"No, I can assure you, it is not," she said, looking all over his face carefully as she spoke.

He kissed the ministring hand, and would have kissed the other also, had she not started back suddenly, her golden lashes drooping over her eyes, dark with strong emotion. She stood there for a moment, helplessly fingering her apron. Charles laughed at her confusion.

"You are making fun of me," she said, much hurt.

"In that case, I take my leave."

"Come in the evening; come with Mr. Max; I shall make you some apple tarts."

"Cannot Max come without me?"

"No, no! I'd rather have you without him!" she cried, and, again blushing furiously, ran away into the house.

Charles smiled to see her run—and went off to dine.

Since winter many changes had taken place at the Baums'. The great factory pavilions were all silent. It was the silence of death, for now scarcely a fourth part of the people were at work. The garden about the house had the air of a wilderness. Multitudes of dead trees held up their

naked branches to the sky; and all the rest stood neglected among the rank weeds that had overspread the flower-beds, now neither dug nor sown. In the house there was not a gleam of joy or gladness: the deserted rooms were hushed, and exhaled a musty odour. The office was almost empty. Baum had sent his clerks away, keeping only Joe Yaskulski, and a few women in the department where retail goods were sold.

All told of coming bankruptcy, and the air was impregnated with odours of medicines, Mrs. Baum having been sick for several months. Bertha and her children had gone back to their father's house; Frau Augusta alone remained, with her two cats and the bandages on her everlastingly swollen face; old Mr. Baum, who sat alone all day in his bureau, on the first floor of the factory; and Joe, still more timid and gawky than he had been before.

Boroviecki went straight to the room where Mrs. Baum was lying, to talk a little with her. She was sitting up in bed, propped by a number of pillows, and looking mechanically out with dull, faded eyes, at the trees waving outside the casement. She held a stocking in her hand, but was not knitting. She smiled—so sad a smile that it pierced the heart.

"Good-morning!" she answered Charles in a feeble voice, adding: "Is Max here?"

"Not yet, but he will come presently."

Then he asked about her health, how she had spent the night, how she felt now . . . and so on. Her state aroused a feeling of tenderness and sympathy that in him was strange indeed.

"It is well with me, well," she replied in German, while, as if awaking from a long sleep, she looked round the room, her eyes resting on the photographs of her children and grandchildren that hung upon the walls; she followed the to-and-fro movements of the pendulum of the clock as it ticked, and at last tried to do a little knitting, but it slipped from her strengthless fingers.

"It is well with me, well!" she repeated half-consciously,

and once more fixed her gaze on the long leaves of the acacia waving outside the window.

She noticed neither Frau Augusta, though she passed through the room several times, stopping a moment to arrange the pillows, nor her husband, who came and stood by her bed-side, to cast a long look at that face, pallid with a shade of yellow.

"Max!" she whispered suddenly, and her cadaverous features shone for a moment at the sound of her son's approaching footsteps.

Max came in and kissed her hand. She pressed his head to her bosom, and stroked it; but when he had passed into the dining-room, she turned her eyes again to the window.

Dinner there was usually silent and short, everybody feeling depressed by the prevailing sadness around.

Old Mr. Baum had changed almost past recognition. He had grown much thinner and stooped much more; his face was browner, and on either side of his nose a furrow ran down that seemed as if carved in wood. He endeavoured to talk, and asked about the progress of the new factory, but more than once broke off in the midst of a sentence, and fell into a brown study; or, forgetting his meal, would cast his eyes on the walls of Müller's place, and let them wander towards the glass roofs of Travinski's spinning-mill, glittering in the sunlight.

Dinner over, he withdrew to his factory, walked about the deserted chambers, gazed at the looms that stood idle; then, shut up in his office, he would look out upon the town with its thousands of houses, factories, and high chimneys, and listen with unspeakable bitterness to the sounds that told of the seething life within.

He never went anywhere now, but remained cloistered in his factory, his life ebbing away with its life. For, as Max had declared, the factory was nigh its end. In spite of all endeavours, there was no means of keeping it alive. In its conflict with the giant Steam it was doomed to succumb. And yet, even now, Baum could not see this; or rather he would not;

he closed his eyes and went on struggling, determined to struggle to the bitter end.

No one could convince him; neither Max, nor his sons-in-law, nor those of his old friends who still survived, advising him to substitute steam for hand-labour production; some of them even ready to aid him with their credit or their money. He would not hear of it.

What he sold was next to nothing. The spring season had been a terrible one for Lodz in general. He had reduced the number of his workmen, restricted production, retrenched on his own personal needs—but remained inflexible in his resistance. A void had opened round him. In Lodz they had begun by saying that old Mr. Baum was out of his mind, but after a time of mockery and derision they had all forgotten him.

As soon as dinner was over, Boroviecki withdrew. Not till he was in Piotrowska Street did he breathe freely, so sinister had been the impression made on him by the deathly atmosphere of the house.

As he had still plenty of time before going to meet Lucy, he repaired to Vysocki's lodgings. Dr. Vysocki, however, was very busy, several patients being in the waiting-room, and he greeted Charles with a troubled expression.

"Excuse me for a little," he said; "when I have done with this patient, we shall go round together to my mother's room."

Boroviecki sat down and took in at a glance the whole of the tiny room, crowded with furniture and smelling strongly of carbolic acid and iodoform.

"Well, let's go in to Mother," Vysocki said at last, after dismissing an aged Jew to whom he had been explaining at great length what he ought to do.

"Doctor, Doctor!" the man cried in a shaky voice, coming back again.

"What do you want?"

"Doctor, have I any cause to fear?"

"I have told you there was no danger, provided you do as I bid you."

"Many thanks, I shall; I need to be in good health. I am in business, and have a wife and children. And grandchildren too. But I am much afraid, and therefore ask you, Doctor: have I anything to fear?"

"I have told you once for all!"

"Then, till I see you again! But—— Excuse me, I am off, I am out," he cried, for Vysocki was rushing at him as if he would throw him out of doors.

At that very instant a corpulent Jewess pushed forward into the doorway, and whined: "Doctor, Doctor! I have great difficulty in breathing!"

"Instantly.—Perhaps you will go round to my mother, Charles, and I shall join you when I have done with my patients."

"What a queer collection you have!"

"Queer indeed. The one who just left me has been bothering me for a whole hour, and, profiting by your appearance, went off forgetting to pay."

"That's no joke. But I fancy such cases must occur seldom."

"Jews are always ready to forget, and one has to remind them; which is far from pleasant," Vysocki returned dejectedly, as he took him in to Mrs. Vysocka.

It was since Boroviecki's last visit to the country that he had made her acquaintance. Anne had written to her, and he had more than once spoken to her in the interests of his fiancée. He found her in an arm-chair near one of the windows, sitting in the full glare of the sunbeams, of which a shaft shot through upon her; all the other windows were darkened by drawn blinds and *portières*.

"I have had to wait a long time, a long time for your coming," she observed, extending to him her long, exquisitely beautiful hand and delicate taper fingers.

"I have indeed been slow to come, but I trust you will forgive my delay. It was really impossible to come yesterday. Some machinery had arrived, and I was forced to spend the whole afternoon seeing it unpacked."

"Then it could not be helped, and I hope you will excuse

my asking you to come at all, since you have so little time."

"My time is at your service, madam!"

He sat down on a low stool beside her, but first drew it a little back into the shadow. The sun glared down upon the narrow space exposed to its beams and upon her slender frame, giving her black hair a ruddy tinge of mellow colour, lighting up her olive complexion, which was still most beautiful, and dusting with gold the brown of her large hazel eyes.

"You, I see, madam, are not afraid of the light," he could not help remarking.

"I am fond of it, and revel in the sunbeams.—Has Miecio many patients?"

"I saw several in the waiting-room."

"It matters not to me—oh, not at all—whether Miecio earns much or little; in either case we can both live on the residue of my personal estate. But it does matter to me if he could feel less interested in such a crowd of possibly unfortunate, but certainly filthy people—Jews and others—who flock to him here. True, something should be done to relieve suffering and misery; but why don't other doctors do as he does? Many belong to a class which should prevent them from having such an abhorrence to rage and dirt, to which they have been accustomed from their infancy."

A nervous tremor ran through her as she spoke, and over her handsome face there passed a look of disgust and loathing; she raised her lace handkerchief to her cheeks, as if at the nauseous remembrance of some very offensive odour.

"There's no help for it," said Charles, adding somewhat flippantly, "especially as Miecio loves his patients, and dreams of them alone."

"I admit the fact. I may even suppose that all great minds must have their dreams, their beautiful but chimerical visions, that make the sordid realities of life more bearable for them. More: I can understand a man devoting his whole life to such a dream; but not loving those dreams, clad in tatters and daubed with filth!"

She ceased from speaking, and drew forward a sea-green

silken screen, painted with golden birds and bushes; the sun, reflected from a zinc roof, was now throwing too fierce and crude a glare into her room.

For some minutes she sat in silence, her head turned in his direction, and quite transformed in the wonderful greenish gold light filtering through the screen. Then, in a confidential tone, "Do you know Melania Grünspan?" she asked; a subtle shade of aversion was audible, as the name fell from her lips.

"I do, but by sight only, and in company. Personally, I know her very little."

"A pity!" she said, rising to her feet.

She crossed the room several times with a stately tread, and listened at the door of her son's consulting-room, through which there came a faint sound of voices. She peered for a moment into the street, tumultuous and roaring with multitudinous movements, and with the fire of summer heat which poured down into it. Charles followed with much curiosity each queenly motion, and though he could not well distinguish her features in the shaded room, he could guess that she was greatly moved.

At last she put a direct question to him. "You are aware, are you not, that the girl Mela is in love with Miecio?"

"I have heard rumours in town to that effect, but taken no notice of them."

"Then it is already common talk! The fact is compromising," she said, firmly.

"Pardon me, and let me explain. They talk of mutual love between them, with a view to marriage."

"Never! I give you my word that, so long as I live, that shall never be," she said in low, impassioned tones. "What! my son marry a daughter of the Grünspans?"

"Miss Mela has in Lodz the reputation of a most honourable and intelligent girl. And as she is very rich besides and very good-looking, it follows——"

"Nothing follows; she is a Jewess!" Mrs. Vysocka hissed with all her force, in tones of scorn, almost of hatred.

"Quite true, she's a Jewess. But if a Jewess loves your

son and is loved by him, the fact solves the problem and settles all differences." He spoke trenchantly, for her prejudices, ridiculous in his ears, had somewhat ruffled him.

"My son may even be in love with a Jewess, but must never dream of uniting our blood to that of another race, hostile to ours."

"Allow me to think, madam, that what you say shows you to be greatly prejudiced."

"And why are you going to marry Anne? Why do you not take to yourself a wife from among the Jewesses or the German girls in Lodz? Ha?"

"Because none of the Jewish or German girls has attracted me to the point of marrying her. If any had, I should not waver for a minute. I am without any prejudice, either of caste or race; they are to my mind mere survivals from the past," he concluded, very much in earnest.

"Oh how blind you all are! You look at things only with the eyes of the body; you think neither of the morrow, nor of the coming race—your children!" she cried, wringing her hands in dismay and pity and indignation.

The talk tending less to amuse Boroviecki than to annoy him, he rose to take his leave.

"Mr. Charles, my wish in seeing you was to ask your help in explaining to Miecio what such a marriage would mean. I know he has the greatest esteem for you, and that he would be more ready to listen to you than to anybody else, since you are one of *us*. You understand my feelings, and can realize how impossible it is for me to think without horror of a low business man's daughter reigning among the living memories and the relics of our family during four centuries. What would *they* say to that?" she cried in agony, pointing with a sweeping gesture to a row of portraits of knights and senators, that loomed forth out of the dimness of her chamber in patches of mellow colour.

Boroviecki smiled grimly. Tapping with his finger an old rusty suit of armour that stood between two of the windows, he uttered these terse, trenchant words: "All this is no more!

Archæology has its place in the museums; in our days living men are too busy to trouble about ghosts!"

"You are laughing?—Yes, you have all of you sold yourselves to the Golden Calf; you call our traditions dust, nobility a prejudice, and virtue a pitiful and ridiculous superstition!"

"Not so; merely a thing of no use in our times. How can my respect for tradition help me to sell my calicoes? When I am starting a factory and looking about me for credit, how can the *Castellans*,* my forefathers, be of use? No *Voyvod** can grant it, but the Jews can. All this antiquated prejudice about traditions is like a thorn in the foot: it hinders all progress. A man of the present day, who will not be the bondsman of another, must be freed from the fetters of the past, such as nobility, caste, and so forth. They hamper the will, they enfeeble it in the struggle with adversaries, unscrupulous because they have no traditions; with enemies formidable because they are their own past and present and future."

"No. That is not so.—But I say no more. You may be right; but never will I give up my point.—I will show you a letter from Miss Grünspan to Miccio, written in Italy. There is no indiscretion on my part, for some words in it are addressed to me."

The letter was rather long, penned in a good commercial hand, and full of slightly high-flown praises of Italy. But when she spoke of herself, her home, her anticipated meeting with Miccio, it thrilled with suppressed affection and longing.

"A charming letter!"

"Ridiculously exaggerated and quite commonplace. Her ecstasies are all taken from Baedeker; they are only poses to make herself interesting."

* *Castellans* and *Voyvods*—high dignitaries of the ancient kingdom of Poland, who were ex-officio members of the Senate. The families which had *Voyvods* and *Castellans* as ancestors constituted the aristocracy of the realm.—*Translator's Note*.

Vysocki rushed in, jaded, pale, with his tie on one side and his hair in disorder. He excused himself for not coming—and for having to depart at once. He was called by telephone to a factory where the machinery had crushed a workman's arm.

Boroviecki wished to leave with him and get away.

"Pray do as I have asked you," she said, pressing his hand in hers with a strong grip.

"I must first of all ascertain the real state of things. It may well be that the danger you foresee does not exist."

"I pray God it may not.—When shall I see you again?"

"Anne will be here in a fortnight; as soon as ever she comes, I shall bring her to see you."

"Shall you be at the Travinskis' on Sunday? It is her name-day."

"I shall, without fail."

She went before him to show him out, but on opening the door of the waiting-room, she shrank back quickly and rang violently for the servant.

"Marysia! Open the windows and let in some fresh air. I shall let the gentleman out by the other entrance."

She led him through a suite of darkened rooms with blinds drawn down and furniture of antique make, all hung with portraits and historical paintings, and old, torn, faded pieces of tapestry: melancholy apartments, not unlike chambers in some ancient convent.

"The woman is crazy!" Charles thought when he reached the street.

The weather was hotter than ever; volumes of smoke floated over the town like grey canopies, through which the sun poured its broiling heat and glowed intolerably. Men and women crawled along the pavement; horses stood still, with drooping heads, carts went by at a snail's pace, and all the bustle in the shops was no more; only the factories went on with never-ceasing din, breathing forth their smoky breaths from out of the high chimneys, and discharging into the gutters coloured streams of waste product, as exhausted living bodies discharge sweat.

Boroviecki made the best of his way to Helen Park, where it was very cool and quiet. The young trees were drinking in the sunbeams through every pore of their quivering leaves, that shaded the snowy tables of the restaurant pavilions there. The lawns were bright with fresh greenery, and looked like carpets, embellished with red and yellow tulip-flowers, and intersected with light brown paths and gravel walks, about which many a swallow flew.

In front of the menagerie cages, in which the wild beasts lay asleep, troops of children were running about and enjoying the fun of teasing the monkeys, which chattered and leaped furiously to and fro in the cage at the corner. The narrower avenues were edged with wild vines of a light luxuriant green, reflected in a long piece of water, whose smooth satin-like expanse was skimmed above by swallows' wings, and cloven beneath by the dark bulks of fishes darting to and fro. Below the pearly surface, down in the depths of the waters, carp in golden shoals moved by.

Charles entered the avenue, meaning to pass round the pond in shade, and thence to the upper park, when he noticed Horn, who was, along with Kama, sitting by the water's brink, and partly concealed by a wild vine. They were feeding the carps.

Kama was hatless, with hair all over her face; blowzed, and blithe as a goldfinch. In she cast the crumbs of bread, laughing merrily like a child, screaming at the fishes that rose to the surface and greedily opened their rounded mouths, and frightening them away with a long rod of willow. Every now and then she would turn her radiant face to Horn. He sat a little back, leaning against the pleached railings which supported the wild vines, and amused himself with the fishes quite as merrily as she did.

Boroviecki, walking away, could still see their heads bent above the water, when he had passed to the other side and reached the upper park; he could even hear at times their melodious laughter, ringing out from that leafy bower, and reverberating across the pond.

He walked for some time in complete solitude through

many a narrow walk, bordered with thickets and thorny bushes. Birds were twittering sleepily amongst the shrubs, leaves were rustling, dreamy sounds rose from the town afar.

He seated himself in a main alley, close to the steps down to the ponds, and watched the children playing very noiselessly under the closed eyes of their nurse-maids, dozing on the benches.

He woke up suddenly from his drowsy meditations; the sharp dry rustle of a gown had roused him. Raising his eyes, he beheld Mme Likiert just before him. She held a pale-violet sunshade in her hand: it cast its warm shadow over her sorrowful features and her great eyes.

Each saw the other at about the same time; each held out to the other a friendly hand. Her pale face was flushed with sudden joy, her eyes flashed with a bright light, her wan lips took a deep-red tint. She was stepping forward as if to embrace him. All of a sudden a cloud had come over the sun, and wrapped the park—and their souls—in greyness, as with a soiled rag. Her extended hand fell limp to her side, the fire in her eyes went out, her lips—pale once more—were set hard with pain, and her look, withdrawn from his face, was again shrouded in gloom. She shot a cold glance at him, and went swiftly by at first, then slowly down the steps to the ponds.

He followed her instinctively for a few steps, carried away by an extraordinary impulse that had seized him. She turned round on him instantly, threw him one look—very stern, yet very tearful—and went on her way.

Sitting down, he riveted his eyes on the spot where her eyes had gleamed a few instants ago, and touched his eyelids. They had suddenly grown heavy and burning hot. He was trembling all over; those eyes of hers had made his heart as cold as death. Again, not knowing why, he stood at the top of the steps, watching for a long time that slender form that seemed floating in the air, and the long shadow, gliding over the glassy pond. Once more he sat down—sat motionless, incapable of thought, plunged in the abysses

of his own mind; and from under his half-closed lids there shot a light that was ever increasingly painful.

"She despises me!" he said, her eyes again present to him, and her arms falling limp in the hurricane rush of her realizations. He tried to laugh it off, but the laugh never came from his lips, for he felt his heart bitter exceedingly, and full of weariness not to be borne.

With heavy steps, he made for the grotto. Lucy awaited him there. She flew to his arms, heedless of anything else in the world.

"Have a care! the place is full of people! We might be seen," he said in a voice husky with irritation, looking round him on every side.

"Forgive me, please forgive me!—Have you had long to wait?"

"For a whole hour. I was just going away, for I cannot lose so much time."

"Let's go to the greenhouse—under the cherry-trees. No one is ever there," she said in subdued, beseeching tones.

They went there, walking so close together that their hips touched. Lucy often glanced at his eyes and pressed still closer, smiling sweetly with lips hotly craving for kisses; her breath came short and fast, with the heat of the afternoon and the longing for passionate delight.

That day she was most temptingly beautiful, attired in a gown of Bordeaux silk, so light and so bewilderingly soft, with rustling folds, that her figure and magnificent shoulders, her splendidly developed breast and hips, appeared to the fullest advantage. Shining with beauty, health, and youth, her face, with its wonderful warm olive complexion, peeped out of a great collar *à la Médicis*, and her marvellous violet eyes, set off by the jet-black brows and lashes, burned so bright and so strongly that Charles began to feel her passionate glances reflected in his own face. They fired him with their glow, and his strong resolve of breaking with her was enfeebled. The loss of those lips, so brimming over with delight and burning with kisses—of those looks and ardent sighs, which inflamed him with their fire—of those whispers

and pressures, so full of the most ardent passion—of all that delight in her which he felt was not exhausted yet—all these losses were too painful to think of.

He set to kissing her passionately, though with the memory yet present within him of the bitter meeting with Mrs. Likier. She returned kiss for kiss, so long, so tempestuously, and with such fire, that she all at once grew deadly pale, and fell half swooning into his arms.

"O Charles! I am dying, dying!" she whispered with pallid lips, on which still dwelt the whole immensity of her mighty raptures. She threw her arms round him, and after resting there a while, her eyes half closed and sighing with desire, she said: "I love you.—Do not kiss me.—I feel so faint, so faint!"

When at last within the greenhouse, hidden from curious eyes by a curtain of boughs that hung very low, she sank down on a wheelbarrow that stood by the wall, and laid her head on his shoulder (for he had sat down by her side), and remained silent for a long while. His arms were round her waist; he caressed her face, now pallid under the olive tint, and rained kisses on her half-closed eyelids, out of which tears were beginning to trickle.

"But what is this? why are you weeping so?"

"I do not know, I do not know," she murmured, and the tears ran faster down her cheeks, and sobs shook her frame more and more strongly.

He wiped her eyes, kissed and comforted her, but all to no purpose. She still cried like an injured child, and could not be consoled. Time and again she would smile, but then another burst of weeping would darken her violet eyes, and the smile was no more.

Charles began to feel uneasy, and then impatient. His fiery love had gone, quenched by her tears; he sat there, frozen, utterly confused by such a fit of hysteria—or was it only nerves?

He asked again what ailed her; but in vain. She answered nothing, laid her head upon his breast, clasped him in her arms, and wept by fits and starts.

After a time she left off, dried her tears, looked at her face in a tiny pocket-mirror, set her hat straight, and, watching his clouded face, said very low: "Charles, have I offended you?"

"What do you mean? Not at all. I was only uneasy, seeing you cry so."

"Do forgive me. I could not help it, I could not. I had been waiting so long, so long expecting to see you—and was so enchanted at the thought! For I am unhappy, Charles, very unhappy at home.—Take me away, Charles; kill me if you wish to, but do not let me go back among them!" she cried out loud, catching hold of his hands with a despairing gesture, looking greedily into his eyes and begging for mercy and rescue.

"Be calm, Lucy, you are beside yourself, your nerves are terribly unstrung; you do not even know what you want to have."

"I do know, Charles, I do know: it is you that I want! I cannot, I cannot bear to be with them any more!" she cried with flashing eyes.

"But what can I do for you as to that?" he said crossly, and a dark, angry shadow rose for an instant in his grey eyes.

She started up at his words, as though at an abyss opening before her, and stared at him in terrified stupor. "Charles, you do not love me! You have never loved me!" she stammered with trembling lips, awaiting his answer with death in her heart.

But although an answer—a direful one for her—was on the tip of his tongue, he controlled himself with an impulse that seemed like pity, fondled her, and kissed those lips that twitched with dreadful forebodings, and those eyelids that fluttered like the wings of a dying butterfly. "You are greatly excited to-day, your nerves are quite out of order. Lucy, you must control yourself, and neither say nor think of any such things, because you pain me exceedingly. Will you do so, Lucy?" he whispered, doing all he could to soften his voice.

"Yes, Charles, I will. Forgive me; I love you so tremen-

dously, and was so afraid lest you—I could not do otherwise, I wanted to make sure.”

“And now you believe in me and are quite at rest, are you not?”

“I do believe. Whom could I believe in, unless in you?” she cried most sincerely, out of the depths of her heart.

“Have you had any unpleasantness at home?”

“Yes, and how much! Every day there are a thousand unpleasantnesses. But to-day Aunt came from Chenstohova, and does nothing but complain that we have no children. You hear that, Charles? All the family is against me, and always loading me with reproaches. He says he will divorce me, for his family make him ashamed on my account. They are to meet in council to-day, and Aunt proposes taking me to Brody, where there is a *tsadyk*, a sort of rabbi, who can advise what should be done.”

“And you agreed?”

“I had to. I cannot resist them; I have no one to stand up for me. I was obliged,” she ended, grinding her teeth under the crushing impression of her own powerlessness, and looking imploringly at Charles, with a mute appeal for salvation. But Charles moved uneasily and took out his watch.

“Do you know, Charles, they have threatened me—unless I submit to what they want—to have me divorced and sent away to some small town. Away, far away from you, where I should never see you any more!”

Struck with sudden blind terror of such an eventuality, she fell into his arms, clung to him, hugging him with all her might; and in a wild outburst of dread and love, she caught both his hands and covered them with kisses.

“We must be off now. The band is going to play. People will be here in numbers, and someone might see us.”

“Let them! I love you, Charles, and am ready to declare my love before the whole world!”

“Still, one must keep up appearances.”

“What would you do, if one day I came to you—to stay with you for ever?” She nestled anxiously close to him, her face transfigured by the glow of love, as she put this ques-

tion. "And," she went on to say fondly, with a kiss after every word, "we should be with each other for ever—for ever—for ever!"

"What a great baby you are! You have no idea what you are saying! Why, the very thought is madness."

"And is not all love madness?"

"It is, it is; but we must separate now," he said hastily, hearing the distant sounds of the band, floating through the thickets and the deepening twilight.

"Don't you love me, Charles?" she asked, this time light-heartedly, putting up her mouth for a kiss in reply.

But his look had a cold hard glint, and his voice sounded so harsh, as he answered, that she started and shrank away from him, and walked on by his side in confused amazement, looking sadly at the thickets of verdure they were traversing, in which already lurked many shadows of the oncoming twilight, though shot through here and there by the keen, red rays of the setting sun. And although he assured her of his love in the sweetest voice he could assume, and kissed her tenderly at parting, she went away in sore dread, casting a sad look from afar upon her lover as he stood beneath the trees.

The band was executing a melancholy waltz, that echoed all over the vast park with a faint, gentle melody, thrilling the leaves of the trees, and the cups of the flowers that were closing. Charles walked on along the main avenue, behind the menagerie, to avoid meeting any of his acquaintances. He had perceived Horn and Kama walking hand in hand in front of him, nodding their heads in time to the music. Kama's hat was in her other hand; her hair, blown about all round her head, seemed pierced by the sunbeams as by golden pins, while they, walking westward, paused to gaze down upon Lodz from a bit of rising ground. Charles, taking a side street to avoid meeting them, went off full speed in a cab.

CHAPTER IV



COME in and take tea. Aunt will be cross with me if I come home without you," Kama said to Horn, who had seen her to Spacerova Street.

"I am in a hurry. I must look Malinovski up. He has not been at my lodgings these three days, and I am anxious about him."

"Good. But when you have got hold of him, you must both come in and take tea."

"That's all right."

They shook hands in good fellowship, and parted. But Kama called him back from the front door. He stopped and turned round.

"Tell me, you feel better now, don't you? You are not so downcast as you were?"

"Better, much better; and I owe it all to your kindness."

"You have got to be in good health—and not feel miserable—and go to Shaya's to-morrow. All right?" she said, stroking the young man's face with a sort of motherly caress.

He kissed the tips of her fingers and made his way home, walking slowly and with something of apathy, though he was really concerned at Malinovski's protracted absence. They were lodging together, and he had come to know him well during the past few months, while waiting to find a situation.

Malinovski was out, the rooms were empty. And it was abundantly clear that the friends were hard up—very much so. Horn had quarrelled with his father, who, determined to bring his obstinate son back home, had cut off his allowance.

He had not succeeded. Young Horn had stubbornly re-

solved to get on by his own efforts. Meantime he had lived on credit, getting loans, selling his furniture bit by bit, and so on. Also on his love for Kama. It filled all his being with an ineffably sweet charm, like that June night, now falling over the town, full of deep silences and with the stars—those dream-flashes—twinkling athwart the ether waves, eternal like her love, and like it not of the earth.

He ceased to think about himself, having resolved to go and seek out his friend. More than once had Malinovski thus mysteriously disappeared—to return pale and haggard, refusing to say where he had been; but never had he been absent for so long.

Horn went round to all those of his acquaintances who were likely to know something, but no one had seen Malinovski for several days. And he did not wish to make Adam's parents uneasy by telling them; at any rate, they should be last called upon.

The thought came to him of asking at the Yaskulskis', where Malinovski went very frequently. They now lived in one of the newly built lanes between the railway, the forest, and Scheibler's factory. This lane was as yet partly fields, partly rubbish-heaps, and only to some extent part of the town; and it ran in a crooked line amongst green corn, mounds of dust carted thither from the town, and deep sand-pits. Certain vulgar four-storey houses, jerry-built, of brick without plaster, showed their red walls beside other little wooden huts and shanties of boards, put together anyhow and used for storing goods. At the foot of an eminence of no great height, beyond which ran the lane, a stream of turbid water, contaminated by impurities from factories and mills, infected the air with horrible exhalations. It formed the boundary between town and country, and wound among the fences set up and the rubbish shot out there by the town.

The Yaskulskis lived close to the forest, in a half-ruined wooden cabin, with several windows in front, several out-houses, and a loft with a dormer-window in the first storey, which was very lop-sided. They were considerably better

off now. The father earned five roubles a week at Boroviecki's factory, now building, and his wife managed a small grocery store, owned by a baker, and got for her services her lodgings free and ten roubles monthly.

Tony was sitting in front of the store, wrapped in a blanket, and looking up dreamily and languidly to the crescent of the moon, just emerging from behind a cloud and silvering the zinc-plated roofs, wet with dew, and the chimneys of the town.

"Is Joe at home?" Horn inquired, grasping the dry hand of the consumptive boy.

"He is," Tony answered with an effort, still holding the other's hand.

"Do you feel any better now than in winter?"

The boy said, pointing to the moon, and staring with hollow eyes: "Can one not get there?"

"Perhaps—when one is dead," Horn replied, hastily going into the shop.

"I feel how awfully quiet it must be up there," the boy said, shuddering all over; and yet a smile of grim, potent, dreary yearning passed over his thin face. He remained silent, letting his arms drop. Resting his head against the door he sat by, he plunged his soul into the infinite spaces through which the silver crescent of the moon was gliding.

Joe was sitting at the back of the shop, in a tiny room stuffed with beds and sticks of furniture, and so close that even the opening of both door and window did but little to make the air fresher.

"Is it long since you saw Malinovski?"

"He has not been here for a fortnight; I saw him last on a Sunday."

"Has Sophy been long away too?"

"She does not come to see us any more; Mother is offended with her."

Looking with no great interest at the room, and the shop, with its bright rows of milk-cans, Horn considered where he was likely to come across Adam Malinovski, and after a few more breaths of that stifling air, saturated with dust,

smoke, and the odour of bread, took his leave, with a bit of pleasantry: "Have you got hold of another love-letter yet?"

"Oh yes, I have!" he answered, turning very red.

"Well, I'm off."

"I'll go with you."

"What?" Horn asked in jest; "have you a date?"

"I have, I have!—But don't talk so loud; mother might overhear us."

He dressed hurriedly and went out into the darkling street.

The heat of that June night had driven the folk out of houses and hovels. They were sitting in narrow passages, on thresholds, outside the houses, in the sand upon the road, or at the open windows, through which the low-ceilinged little rooms, packed close with bedsteads and truckle-beds, and noisy with swarming humanity, were plainly visible. There were no lamps in the lane; the moon gave it light, as did the scanty rays from windows, open taverns, and shops. In the middle of the road, bands of children were rolling about. From one of the more distant taverns a drinking chorus boomed forth, mingling with the sounds of a concertina, playing a Cracovienne dance-tune in some garret upstairs, and with the rumble of a passing train not far off.

"Where is your trysting-place?" Horn asked, when they had got out into the lane and were walking along a foot-path, that ran townwards across a large potato-field.

"Not far: close to the church."

"Well, success to you!" And Horn walked on to Adam's parents to find out about him.

On entering their lodgings, he found a storm raging within. The mother, standing in the middle of the room, was crying out at the top of her voice. Sophy, close to the stove, wept hysterically, and Adam sat at the table with his face hidden in his hands.

Horn, who had gone in, shrank back at once in dismay. Adam went out after him.

"My dear fellow," he whispered excitedly, "I beg and

pray you, wait for me at the front door for a few minutes," and went back into the lodgings.

His mother was screaming shrilly: "I ask you once more, where have you been these three days?"

"I have told you, Mother. I was with some acquaintances in the country near Piotrkov."

"Sophy, do not tell lies," Adam said sharply, his gentle, sea-green eyes now gleaming angrily. "I know where you have been," he added in a lower voice.

"Well then, where?" the girl cried in terror, raising her eyes full of tears.

"At Kessler's!" he replied very low, but in such a tone of despair that his mother wrung her hands, and Sophy started out of her chair and stood still for some time in the middle of the room, looking round with rebellious eyes.

"Yes! I was at Kessler's. He is my lover! So there!" she shouted, so shamelessly that her mother staggered back to the window, and Adam jumped up from his chair. She stood thus mute for a moment, staring boldly in their faces; but presently a nerve-shattering storm came over her with such effect that she collapsed under it, and, unable to stand, dropped into her former seat and burst into tears, all her body trembling.

Her mother, who had somewhat come to herself by this time, was at her side instantly. Seizing her by the arm, she dragged her to the lamp in an outburst of indignation: "You, Kessler's mistress! You, my daughter!"

Pressing her hands to her temples, she set to pacing the chamber, shrieking, in unbearable pain. "O Jesus! O Mary!" she cried, and wrung her hands in despair.

Again she went up to her and shook the girl with all her might, saying in a voice husky with agitation: "So, all your excursions to your aunt's, your outings, your appointments with other girls at the theatre, your new dresses—*that's* what they all meant!—Ah, now, now I understand!—And I allowed it all, I was so blind! O Jesus! O Mary!—My God, Thou everlasting One, punish me not for my blindness;

punish me not, O merciful Lord, for the sins of my children; their guilt is not mine—not mine!” she cried out in fervent supplication, falling down in profound sorrow before the image of Our Lady, in front of which an oil-lamp was glimmering.

Then she rose from her knees, very pale; her face was swollen, threatening, implacably stern.

“Off with that velvet this instant!” she vociferated.

Sophy was dazed and failed to understand; and her mother pulled off the velvet bodice she wore, tearing it to strips.

“The mark of your shame, you street-walker!” And, maddened by the craving to destroy, she tore all her daughter’s other garments to pieces, and trampled them under her feet. Rushing to the chest of drawers, she flung out of it and tore up everything that was Sophy’s, the latter looking on wild-eyed at the ravage wrought, or uttering broken sentences:

“He loves me—has promised me marriage—I could not endure to stay there.—Live all my life a factory girl, and die one?—I will not!—Dear Mother, dearest Mother mine, forgive me! Have mercy on me—I beseech you!” she cried aloud, falling at her feet, all her strength of resistance completely broken.

“You may go to your Kessler now. I have no daughter any more,” her mother said in a hard voice, opening the door wide, and shrinking from her daughter’s touch.

Sophy, suddenly thunder-struck by the dark horror of her mother’s words and the black corridor she saw yawning wide open before her, started back, and fell at her feet again, screaming horribly in unspeakable fear. She caught at her hands, her dress, clutched at her knees, crawled towards her on the floor, and in a voice broken with sobs, begged frantically for mercy and forgiveness. “Kill me, but do not turn me out! I cannot bear it; kill me!—Brother Adam!—Oh my father, mercy, mercy!”

“Off with you instantly; if I see you again, I drive you out like a dog and give you up to the police!” the inexor-

able mother hissed, turned to stone by the bitterness at her heart. That intense pain within her had slain everything—even mercy itself.

Adam looked on and listened, externally unmoved; but the keen glitter of anger had died out of his sea-green eyes, and they were moist.

“Away with you—go away!” her mother cried again, in steely tones.

Then Sophy rose to her feet, and rushed with a piercing shriek out of the room into the passage. The neighbours opened their doors and peeped; she ran out, seen by every family in the house, downstairs and into the yard, where she crouched down under a blossoming acacia, and fainted away in a spasm of sheer animal terror.

Adam ran down after her, brought her to, and said in a gentle brotherly voice: “Sophy, come to me; I will not forsake you.”

She answered nothing, but struggled to escape from him—to get away and be gone. He calmed her, though he found it hard work; wrapped her up in a shawl that he brought out of the house—for the girl’s clothes were all in strips—and, taking her firmly by the hand, led her to a cab.

Horn, who had been waiting at the front door, now came up to them.

“It so happens that Sophy will be staying with me for some days; could you not find a lodging elsewhere for yourself meanwhile?”

“Certainly, I will go to Vilchek’s; he has plenty of room.”

They drove on in silence; only, as they passed before the Kesslers’ mansion, Sophy clung desperately to her brother, shedding tears.

“Do not weep: we shall settle everything. Do not weep: Mother will come round, and I’ll see Father myself,” he said kindly; he kissed her wet eyes, and stroked her dishevelled hair.

So much comforted did she feel by his kindness that she put her arms round him, laid her head on his bosom, and

—indifferent to Horn's presence—complained in incoherent whispers of her unhappy fate.

They immediately prepared her brother's room for her; he was to take Horn's room. She shut herself up, and would not come out for tea, though Horn had made some for her. Adam took it to her. She drank a little: then threw herself down on her bed, and went to sleep in an instant.

Adam went in several times to look after her; he covered her up as best he could, and wiped her face with a handkerchief; for though she slept, the tears welled up through her eyelids. Then he went back to Horn, and said: "Can you guess at what has taken place?"

"No, I cannot. Say nothing about it, please, for I see how painful it is to you. I am going at once."

"Wait a few minutes still.—You have—you must have heard things said about Sophy?"

Horn replied evasively: "I never take any notice of gossip, nor listen to any."

Malinovski, rising to his feet, said abruptly: "It was the truth, and no gossip!"

"And what do you intend to do?" he inquired with deep sympathy.

"To go straight to Kessler," Adam said with stern resolution; and his sea-green eyes took a steely glint, like the barrel of the revolver he carried in his pocket.

"It will be useless. With a brute you cannot settle matters a brute does not understand."

"I can but try—and if I fail, then——"

"What then?" Horn asked him hastily, struck by the tone of menace in his friend's voice.

"Then we shall take a different line—and see what comes of it."

Horn wanted to explain, but Adam would not hear. On parting at the door, he grasped his friend's hand, and went round to the Kesslers'.

The young man was not in, and no one could tell where he was to be found just then. With what hate he viewed the splendid building, its turrets gleaming in the moonlight, its

gilded balconies, its windows, with the white blinds all drawn down!—He would, he thought, step in to his father.

Old Malinovski, watchful and attentive as usual, was busy with his huge driving-wheel, that like some weird gigantic bird was in motion in the dark vibrating tower, its cage; disappearing beneath the floor, coming up out of the shadow, glittering with the cold sparkling glitter of steel, and revolving with such immense velocity that the eye could see no part of it distinctly. So tremendous was the noise of the machinery, that old Malinovski's shout in his son's ear was but a whisper.

"Have you found her?"

"I brought her home this evening."

His father fixed his eyes upon him. After a while he went to the machine, dropped oil in various places, consulted the manometer, cleaned the pistons that had begun to work noisily and to drip with oil. Then he called out through a tube to the mechanics below, and, returning to his son, said in a strangled voice: "Kessler!" and bared his teeth threateningly.

"Yes. But he belongs to me. You let him alone, Father," Adam said energetically.

"Fool! I have business with him—weighty business. Don't venture to touch him, mind you!"

"I mind; but I'll do as I've said."

"You dare!" the old man growled fiercely, raising a huge grimy fist as though to strike him.

"Where is she now?"

"Her mother has turned her out of doors."

The old man drew a quick breath between clenched teeth. His brown eyes looked deep down under his bushy brows, and threw a dangerous shadow on his grey, gaunt face. He bent down again and set himself to tend the wheel, which was singing—roaring—the frenzied hymn of enraged imprisoned force, working at furious speed between the trembling walls. Athwart a tiny dust-coated window in the tower, there streamed a silver streak of moonlight, in which, like some grey phantom, the monster whirled and howled.

Adam, unable to get anything else out of his father, was preparing to go. He was followed by him and stopped at the very threshold.

"See to her. After all, she is of our blood."

"I have taken her home to my lodgings."

At the words, his father embraced him and pressed him to his heart. Adam and his father looked each into the depths of the other's soul, the one with those gentle sea-green eyes of his, the other with brown eyes tear-dimmed and misty. They looked with intense unfathomable love, and parted without a word.

The old man again resumed his watch over the machinery, wiping his eyes with oil-stained hands.

CHAPTER V



MOST simple affair—and pure gold, I tell you! I have purchased a piece of land which must, look you! which *must* be bought by Grünspan at my own price,” Stanley Vilchek was telling Horn on the following morning. The latter had spent the night in his rooms.

“Why must he?” Horn inquired drowsily.

“Because the land is contiguous to Grünspan’s on two sides—behind and laterally. On the other side there is Shaya’s factory, and the street is in front. Grünspan wants to enlarge his works, and cannot for want of room. He will be here to-day, and his nose will be jolly well put out of joint. You’ll see, ha ha! For three years he has been at it, haggling over this very bit of land, only offering a hundred roubles more every year to the owner, because he wished to get it cheap. He could ‘wait’; he was ‘in no hurry.’ Now, I happened to hear of this, cut in, gave the man a good price, and bought the land without anybody’s knowledge. And now it is I who shall wait and not be in a hurry.” He laughed heartily, blinking and rubbing his hands, and passing his tongue over his big lips.

“How much land have you got?”

“There are four acres in all.—Fifty thousand roubles, as safe as if I had them in my pocket!”

“If there’s any mistake, it will be a big one,” Horn said laughing, somewhat startled by the greatness of the amount.

“In business matters I never make a mistake. Grünspan has to build two pavilions that will employ about two thou-

sand hands. Now think of this: if he built them anywhere else—even, suppose, only two hundred yards off—the expenses of building and administration and getting them into working order would be twice as great.—Will you have any more tea?"

"Please, provided the tea is hot.—But, I say, your cups are dreadfully disreputable for a future millionaire!" Horn remarked, tapping a cracked cup with his spoon.

"Oh, that's all one," was the offhand answer; "I shall drink from a Sèvres service some day.—I'll leave you alone for a few minutes," he added, peeping out of the window and then going into the passage. Several wretchedly dressed old women, with baskets on their arms, had appeared among the withered cherry-trees that stood in front of the house.

Horn meanwhile surveyed the room in which the millionaire *in posse* was living at present.

It was a mere peasant's cabin, with whitewashed walls, of tumble-down aspect. The floor was of clay, beaten hard, and spread over with a calico floor-cloth, printed with red flowers. The windows, small and with frames all awry, had soiled curtains to shade them, and let in so little light that the room, with its miserable bits of furniture—that might have been picked up on a dust-heap—was quite shrouded in twilight, the only thing which stood out in sharp relief being a big samovar, set under a great penthouse on the usual sort of peasant's stove.

Near a score of books lay on the table, amid a litter of old iron, leather straps, reels, and samples of variously dyed cotton yarns. Horn began to look into the books, but put them aside and listened to a woman's plaintive voice outside the window.

"Will you kindly lend me ten roubles, sir? You know me, Rachel Wasserman, for a poor honest woman; and if I don't get that money to-day, I cannot do any business, nor have anything to live on for the whole week."

"I don't lend money without a deposit."

"Mr. Vilchek, you shall have the money back; by all that's holy, I swear you shall! My little ones, my husband,

my mother, are waiting for me to bring them a morsel of bread. And if you won't lend me anything, how am I to get it for them?"

"They may die like dogs for all I care!"

The poor Jewess burst out moaning: "Oh what words, what wicked words you have spoken, sir!"

Vilchek sat down on a bench by the window, and counted out the money the other women had brought him. It was all in small change, making up sums of from one to five roubles at most, pulled out of their bundles and hidden pockets.

"Gitla, this five-kopek piece is a bad one; I'll have another."

"On my conscience, it is good money. I had it from a lady who always buys oranges of me. Why should it be bad? see how it glitters," she cried, having wetted the piece and rubbed it bright with her apron.

"Quick, give me another, I have no time to spare."

"Mr. Vilchek," the Wasserman woman said, persistent in her entreaties, "you are such a kind gentleman, you will make me a loan."

"Stein, fifteen kopeks are missing here!" he ejaculated, turning to a dwarfish old Jewess with a shaky head under a greasy cap.

"Missing? It's impossible. My five roubles are there complete; I have counted right."

"That will do; make up the money. You always say that, Stein, and are always short. We know you of old."

She tried to prove she had paid all, which made Vilchek so furious that he took the money and flung it down on the sand at her feet. The woman uttered a woeful cry, picked it up, and put it back on the bench.

Rachel Wasserman approached Vilchek once more, and, touching his elbow with her finger-tips, said to him in a low tearful voice: "I am waiting, I am waiting for your Honour to be merciful."

"Without proper security," he said, "you shall not get one rouble. Go and borrow from your son-in-law."

"From that scoundrel? Let me not hear his name. I gave him a cool forty roubles, cash down, for my daughter's wedding portion; and in six months the rascal had spent it all! Spent it all, he had. Oh, why, why did he spend such a sum?"

Vilchek paid no attention to her complaints, but went on taking back the capital with the interest for the week before, and lending it out again for the next, noting down names and sums very accurately. He was indifferent to all complaints, and treated that lot of wretched creatures with unconcealed contempt. Not the least shadow of pity came to his heart at the sight of those eyes, red from the burning suns and biting frosts, of those bodies clad in rags, those faces that bore the marks of eternal care and hunger, looking out from beneath their wigs and foul kerchiefs—of the whole array of misery displayed there in the hot sunshine, amongst the dried-up and dying trees, only some of which bore green leaves at all, and among the grassy plots overgrown with weeds—tall stalks of mullein and of burdock flaunting and waving their pale verdure in the air.

Farther on, beyond the road, the town spread out its rows of red-brick houses, chimneys, and roofs, on which the sunbeams played. Clattering and clamour and whistling sounds began to fill the garden with ceaseless din, and to make the crooked walls of Vilchek's dwelling tremble.

Horn had looked on at the swarm of wretched beings that stood outside the house, and had with increasing indignation been initiated into the details of Vilchek's money-grubbing. He could not bear it any longer. No sooner had the latter settled the last loan and returned to the cabin than he silently put on his hat and made for the door.

"Don't go yet."

"I must be at Shaya's. But first of all, a word of truth for you. What I have just seen and heard has made me abhor you, Mr. Vilchek. Pray look upon me, and all those whom I associate with, as strangers—as men who henceforth do not know you."

As he spoke, he raised his voice, and was about to leave

the place with a look of disgust, when Vilchek darted between him and the door.

"I will not let you go away so; you must hear my side of the question!" he cried, purple with fury, but in a firm, quiet voice.

Horn looked him straight in the eyes, and then, still with his hat on, sat down, saying curtly: "I am listening."

"I wish only to explain one point. You no doubt take me for a usurer. I am not. I am only an agent of another—of Grosplik.—All the responsibility for what I do is his; all the profit too. You are the first whom I have told of this. Why? Because I have never hitherto required to justify my doings to anyone."

"Then why do so now? I am not a judicial investigator, and surely no one can force you."

"I do not choose to be condemned unjustly. You may count me amongst your acquaintances or not; please yourself. But I object to being looked upon as a usurer."

"You may rest satisfied that we shall not trouble about you."

"No more than I do about your contempt, though I hear it plainly in your voice."

"Then why are you detaining me now?"

"I was. I am no longer," Vilchek said, stressing his words. "I told you in self-defence that I was merely Grosplik's agent, laying out his money for his profit. That I do not act for him gratis goes without saying."

"But who, for ever so large a salary, would consent to rob the poor?"

"This is mere talk for drawing-rooms, in presence of young ladies; it sounds nicely and obliges one to nothing."

"Ah, Vilchek, it is not mere talk; it is common honesty."

"Call it as you like; I shall not dispute about words. You hold me as a villain—say I help Grosplik to rob the poor, do you? Well, I'll prove that the villain you call me does more for these same poor than all your intellectuals and waifs of nobility put together.—Pray look over this ledger. It contains the amounts of the loans and their interests

during the past year. It was kept by the man whom I replaced. And here is the ledger which I have been keeping since last New Year. Now compare the amounts: loans and profits."

Horn mechanically cast a glance at the two ledgers, and saw that the profits were in the second ledger only half as considerable as in the first.

"What does this mean? How can it be?"

"It means that I charge one hundred and fifty per cent less interest than the other man did. It means—so far as figures can speak—that I give these poor people—out of my own pocket!—from one to two hundred roubles monthly; for this one hundred fifty per cent formed my supplementary remuneration. This I have given up, and seek no praise for my self-denial."

"Then you don't rob them of their money yourself? Really, you are very good to them indeed!"

"Pshaw! you talk like a man who has no idea of business."

"Not so: as a man who sees no heroism in taking a hundred and fifty instead of three hundred per cent."

"Well, let's say no more," Vilchek exclaimed, and with a disappointed gesture flung both ledgers into the iron safe that stood in a corner; and, drumming on the table, he cast his eyes on the cherry-trees waving outside the window.

He was in an evil temper. Horn would spread the fact of his extortioner's doings all through Lodz, and so would close upon him the doors both of the Colony, and of several other houses that he frequented.

Horn regarded him with attentive interest, forgetting to go; his indignation had, during his talk with Vilchek, given place to curiosity. He now appeared to him in quite another light: there was in the man an intense force which he had never yet noticed, though indeed he had hitherto paid no particular attention to him.

"You are eyeing me as if you saw me for the first time."

"I confess this is the first time I have seen anything worth notice in you!"

"A queer sample of humanity, eh? A boor with sordid instincts: ugly, mean, and a blackguard! But what can I do, my good sir? I was born, not in a palace, but in a hovel. I have no good looks, no winning ways with me; I am not one of your set. And so my good qualities—if I have any—are reckoned as vices, all of them. Ah!" he added, his elfin eyes twinkling ironically, "but that does not prevent you gentlemen from borrowing of me!"

"If you please, sir, Wasserman has come again," said the servant, popping his head in at the door.

"She may come in, Voytek.—Let the men go off to the station. Give Antek this invoice, and say I shall be there in half an hour."

In she came, bearing a sabbath candlestick and a large set of amber jewels as security for the ten roubles. These Vilchek paid her at once, deducting in advance one rouble as interest on the week's loan.

"Is that what you call usury? Why, if I had not given her the money, she would have starved. There are in Lodz multitudes of such women, who live on the money they borrow from us; and each of them has children—a mother—a husband—incompetent for anything, or only good to say prayers."

"So, then, society ought to feel thankful for such assiduous benevolence?"

"It might at least let us alone, when we serve it disinterestedly." He laughed a frank but very cynical laugh.

"Mr. Grünspan, sir, is coming in," the servant said, popping in again.

"Wait here a bit longer; you'll witness a very funny scene."

Horn had no time to protest, for Grünspan entered at that moment.

"Ah, good day, Mr. Vilchek!—But you have a visitor; perhaps I may be unwelcome," he said, standing on the threshold with outstretched hand and a cigar in his mouth.

"Pray come in.—My friend Mr. Horn," he replied, introducing him.

Grünspan at once removed his cigar, and glanced at Horn with keen scrutiny.

"Have you been employed at Bucholc's?" he inquired, rather condescendingly. "And are you a son of Mr. Horn of Warsaw, of the firm Horn and Weber?" he went on to ask before any reply to the former question was possible.

"I am."

"Pleased to meet you. Your father and I have dealings together." He extended his hand most graciously, and touched Horn's with the tips of his fingers. "I have dropped in to see you, Mr. Vilchek, in a neighbourly way, as I was passing by, going for a walk."

"Very nice weather to-day. Pray be seated," Vilchek said with great eagerness, unable to conceal the pleasure given him by Grünspan's call.

The visitor sat down, having first drawn apart the tails of his long gaberdine, stretched forward his legs, encased in high boots up to the knees, and lifted up his head and his well-fed face, glistening with fat. His black beady eyes again and again darted to and fro about the room, and out of the window into the garden, and, peering forth at the red walls of his own factory, which stood just beyond, returned to view Horn's features and Vilchek's, the former's with indifference, the latter's with increasing uneasiness. He blew dense clouds of smoke all about him, cleared his throat, fidgeted about on his chair, and was evidently at a loss how to begin.

Vilchek gave him no help, but paced the room to and fro, smiled, licked his big lips, and threw significant looks at Horn, who sat there, sullenly attentive to Vilchek's words and demeanour.

"It is agreeably cool in your house," Grünspan said, to begin the interview, wiping his moist forehead with a checked handkerchief.

"My windows are shaded by the garden trees, and the sun cannot come in. Have you seen my garden, Mr. Grünspan?"

"I have never had time. When could I see it? A busy man

like myself is tied down to his business as a horse to the cart it draws."

"If you like, we may go out into the open air, and I'll show you the whole of my domain. Shall we?"

"All right, all right," Grünspan said eagerly, and led the way.

They passed into a long, narrow courtyard in which were many hollows and dunghills, several ancient washing-tubs, heaps of old iron, iron plates, and cracked pottery, with which a couple of men were loading some large wagons. On one side of the yard were a few ramshackle sheds, built of rotten boards nailed together and thatched; within them there stood barrels of cement. On the other side were stables not less wretched and decayed, that reached as far as Grünspan's factory wall.

"Oh, they're not racehorses!" Vilchek laughed, seeing Horn peep into the stables and view with pain the sorry hacks, lame and languishing, that stood in their stalls with drooping heads.

"Not a very fragrant smell here," said the factory-owner.

They next visited a bit of completely bare field—pure sand—from which the winds had blown away all the vegetable mould, leaving the place as yellow as if painted with ochre.

High mounds of rubbish, dumped down there from the neighbouring town, with lean dogs scratching and digging holes in them, rose along the factory wall, which ran half the length of the field.

"Quite a land of gold. Onions would grow there wonderfully well!" Vilchek observed, smiling sarcastically.

"Well, there's a pretty bit of landscape to be seen from here," Horn put in, pointing to the line of forest land belonging to the town, all bathed in bluish opal mists raised by the sun, and to the waving cornfields with red long-necked factory chimneys behind them.

"A landscape? what do you mean? All that's only building plots for sale," Grünspan cried, nettled by Vilchek's ironical talk.

"You are right. But my plot is the finest of them all. It's close to your factory, and almost inside the town. It might be laid out as a first-class park."

"Lay it out, and my workmen will have somewhere to rest on holidays."

They went back and sat down on the bench.

Horn took his leave and withdrew. The others sat awhile mutely feigning to enjoy the "fresh" air, saturated with the stench of smoke and the acrid exhalations from ditches running with factory waste-products.

In a long, unbroken line, brick-laden carts were passing on the road, and the stifling reddish dust that rose as they passed was settling down on the cherry-trees and on the grass. From Grünspan's factory there unceasingly arose volumes of black smoke that rolled about over the orchard trees, spreading a murky grey canopy above them, through which the sun was hardly to be seen.

"There was," Grünspan began, "a—a little business I was thinking of transacting with you."

"And I know what it is; my friend Moritz Welt told me."

"Oh, since you know what it is," the manufacturer said in an offhand way, "let's speak briefly and to the point."

"Very well.—How much do you offer for this plot of land, which you absolutely need?"

"Need it? I don't. I only thought of making the purchase so that I might pull down your hideous cabin, and fell these trees, which spoil the view of the forest from my house. I am so fond of forests!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Vilchek roared.

"You have a pleasant laugh; good laughter is an important factor in good health," Grünspan remarked, keeping the irritation he felt well down. "But my time is precious, Mr. Vilchek," he added, rising from the bench.

"And so is mine: I must be off to the station."

"Then we do business?"

"What do you offer?"

"Let's come to terms quick; I love that.—Twice as much for your rubbish-heap as you paid that peasant."

Saying this, he held out his hand for the other to grasp.

"Mr. Grünspan, don't trifle and waste time."

"Five thousand roubles, and in ready money."

"Mr. Grünspan, I am much obliged to you for your neighbourly visit; but I am really in a hurry. My horses are now waiting at the station."

"Here's my last word: ten thousand, at once, cash.—Done?" He caught the young man's open hand and struck it in token of agreement.

"Not done! I've no time for child's-play."

Grünspan recoiled some paces. "This—this is robbery!" he said in a rage.

"Mr. Grünspan, you are surely not in good health."

"I take my leave!"

"Till our next meeting!" Vilchek retorted, grinning with joy to see the big factory-owner, who in his fury had thrown his cigar away, and was scuttling through the orchard so fast that the tails of his gaberdine flew out like wings on either side, swishing against the trees, and catching on the thorns of a gooseberry-bush.

"Oh, you'll come back, you will!" Vilchek jeered, rubbing his hands with amusement.

He drank a cup of tea, put all the small change away into the safe, dressed himself up in fine clothes, scented himself, and went off to the station—a smug and self-satisfied dandy.

CHAPTER VI



LOFTY iron railing, sustained by a row of stone pillars at regular intervals, and representing the intertwined stalks of plants, and flowers with gilt petals, separated Shaya Mendelsohn's factory from the street.

With this very artistic piece of ironwork there lay several grass-plots of blackened grass, on which many a bed of glaring purple peonies stood out in bright relief. The main factory building was somewhat in the background: a huge mass, four storeys high and of unplastered brick, having at each of its corners a sort of mediæval bastion, abundantly machicolated. The great entrance-gate, almost a masterpiece of ironwork, that made a break in the railings on one side of the main building, led to the large central courts, divided by four-storey pavilions into quadrangles that formed a grating. From the midst of this, like tall poplars, the red chimneys raised their heads and rolled black veils of smoke over the mighty fortress-factory. Close to the gate, and with windows that looked out on the street, was the main office.

Somewhat intimidated, Horn entered the waiting-room, and after writing his name and his business with Shaya on a blank form the usher gave him, sat down to wait for his turn. Through the open door which led to the office, there were visible in the flickering yellowish gas-light some score or so of heads bending over desks, and beyond them a line of narrow windows that opened on the dark-red factory walls. Standing out among the sombre wainscoted walls were rows of black wooden chests, that wore a truly funereal aspect.

A pungent smell of raw yarn and of chlorine pervaded

the close hot air of the room. The silence was oppressive. Everyone moved automatically, walked on tiptoe, spoke in whispers; but the great far-off muttering of the factory shook the walls and made the gas-lights tremble.

There was a group of men in the centre of the waiting-room, who stood talking in whispers to one another, and paying no heed to the crowd that sat round on benches, or lurked in the shadows of the chests or in the recesses of the windows—a crowd of people of every class, all seeking work. These, whenever the door to Shaya's room opened, would start up instinctively to get a peep into the apartment where the man of millions was reigning. The door would close swiftly and noiselessly, and they would fall back into their places, to gaze vacantly out of the window at the pink acacia blossoms, through which the outlines of the Mendelsohn's palace were visible, with their balustrade gildings, glittering in the bright June sun, and their balconies, and their Venetian windows.

Every now and then the private-room door would open and the usher would call out some name or other. And then the person named would either start up from his seat to respond eagerly to the call, or move slowly and deliberately out of the group of men who stood there, towards the private room. Every now and then, too, there would come out some important business man or some big merchant, accompanied to the door with all the respect due to his money-bags; every now and then, also, there crept out some poverty-stricken fellow, who, pale and with tottering steps, hurried away, looking at no one. Frequently, moreover, there would pass through the waiting-room officials of various sorts and degrees, who had business in the office.

Those in the waiting-room could hear confused murmurs of talk inside, with sometimes a telephone ring and call. Sometimes even the husky voice of Shaya himself would resound beyond the door; and then upon all in the office there descended a deep, stony silence, and not a sound was heard but the gas-lights sizzling and fizzling, or the rattling

of the wagons going about the precincts of the factory.

Suddenly the private room opened, giving passage to a tall man, with a small head, a great stomach, and thin bow-legs. This was Stanislas Mendelsohn, Shaya's eldest son and head manager of the factory, rushing into the office to make an onslaught upon a certain raw-boned clerk.

"I demand of you: what does this mean?" he bawled out at the very top of his voice, thrusting a passport-book into the clerk's startled face, which turned the colour of chamois-leather.

"Mr. Director, this passport was handed to me for you by the Passport Office; as it was given me, so I have brought it."

"You are a man without understanding, without delicacy. To bring me such a preposterous thing is mere intentional chicanery! What! have you not read it?"

"I have, but since they have written: 'Samuel Shayevich Mendelsohn, with his wife Rachel, alias Regina,' it is out of my power to prevent them from doing so."

"You are nothing but an ass, I tell you!—Take a train at once to Piotrkov, and bring me back a passport fit for a human being. Expense is no object, but I tell you I must get it by noon to-morrow, for to-morrow I am starting by express train. So stir your stumps instantly!—Why, I ask you all," he added, turning indignantly to the clerks, "don't you think it's a vile indignity, a thing both mean and ridiculous, that I, Stanislas Mendelsohn, Doctor of Philosophy and Chemistry, should have my name altered to Samuel, and my wife Regina made a Rachel of?"

The elder ones mumbled something like assent; those younger only stared at him with dull vacant eyes.

He would have talked much longer about the wrong and injustice done to him had not the electric bell in the next room sounded sharply, and Shaya's voice from within, partly drowned by angry clamour, called for his attendants to come.

"Let them but touch me, and I'll break their heads in—and yours too, you old thief! I won't stir from here till you

have paid me in full!" So shouted, with all the strength of his lungs, a short but very thickset man, brandishing a metal ruler, snatched up from a desk.

He filled up the doorway with his person, so that the door could not be shut upon him, nor he himself seized by the attendants, who, uncertain how best to deal with him, were standing a little way off.

"Let the police be called in!" Shaya said coolly, keeping away from the scene, which was witnessed by some fifteen pairs of eyes, staring through the open door.

"Mr. Piotrovski," Stanislas cried, hurrying in, "do not make a noise, for you are not going to frighten us. You have received your due, and we refuse to pay more for such miserable work. If you make a noise, we have the means to stop it."

"Give me my fifteen roubles!"

"If you are not satisfied with what we have given you, then take back your water-pipes—and take yourself off before you get hurt."

"How dare you talk to me like that, you scurvy fellow? I am not a robber like you; I am an honest tradesman. You made the agreement with me for forty roubles, and now you give only twenty-five and say I may take my work back if I am not pleased."

"Off with him to the police station!" Shaya roared.

The attendants rushed at the man on a sudden, and disarmed him. He fought and struggled like a wild beast in a trap, but the odds were too great, and he went through the waiting-room without resistance, though pouring forth loud and virulent and strongly coloured invectives, hurled at Shaya.

Quiet reigned again in Shaya's cabinet; he now looked out of the window on his park, bathed in sunlight, and the lawns, sparkling with tulip-flowers, red as bloodstones. Stanislas, hands in pockets, went whistling about the room.

"All this row has been on your account, Stanislas," the old man said, sitting down again at his desk in the centre of the room.

"Possibly. But it costs him fifteen roubles, and a couple of months in jail."

He grinned and put up his glasses; the attendant had announced Horn, whose turn it was at last.

He bowed, and silently returned Shaya's scrutinizing gaze.

"From this day on, you will be in our firm. Müller has spoken quite favourably of you, and you shall have the situation. Do you speak English?"

"At Bucholc's I was correspondent in that language."

"You will begin with us as correspondent; later we shall employ you in some other way. For the first month—on trial. Will that suit you?"

"Yes, it will, I agree," Horn said hurriedly; the prospect of a whole month's work to be done gratis was but little to his taste.

"Remain a bit; we shall have a talk. I know your father's firm."

But their conversation was cut short by the entrance of Dr. Vysocki, who had for several months been engaged as physician at Shaya's factory. He entered in a hurry, as was his wont, and came to the point directly.

"Be seated, Doctor, pray be seated," said Mendelsohn senior. But Stanislas had just taken the only available seat in the room.

"I have called you, Doctor, to ask you about a detail, but a most important one," said Mendelsohn junior, thrusting his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and extracting therefrom a bundle of crumpled prescriptions, together with a long bill. "The account and the prescriptions for last quarter have just come in. As I like to have an eye to everything, I have looked through them and come to certain conclusions, which conclusions are the business about which I sent for you."

"I am highly interested."

"The account is considerable. A thousand roubles in one quarter is in my opinion far too much."

"What am I to understand by this remark?"

"Be calm, Doctor. Please take what I have said just as

I have said it. That is to say, the account is too large; too much money is spent."

"But how am I to help that? The workmen fall ill, there are many cases, and they have to be treated."

"Quite true; but the question is, in what way?"

"And that is my business."

"Doubtless it is, and we keep you for that purpose. But what I have at heart is the manner of treatment, the method which you follow, Doctor," Stanislas said, raising his voice slightly, and not meeting Vysocki's eye, but twirling his eye-glass string round his finger. "And then comes the question, what means you employ."

"Why, those that medical science has at its disposal," Vysocki rejoined, somewhat tartly.

"Well, for instance, take the first prescription on the list. Let me see: it cost one rouble twenty. Very dear, that. Decidedly too dear for a workman who earns five roubles a week. We cannot afford it."

"Had I any remedy as efficacious and less expensive, I should have prescribed that other one, of course."

"A remedy too costly should not be employed in any case."

"Then better not treat the patient at all?"

"Calm yourself, Dr. Vysocki, and pray be seated. Let us discuss the matter like well-bred people, like gentlemen.—Here again, I see you have ordered bottles of genuine Ems water. Of these the man has drunk twenty; that comes to ten roubles. Now do you really think that the Ems water has done him any good?" he asked rather sarcastically, playing with his eye-glass string and walking about the room.

"At any rate, he has recovered, and been at work in the factory for a month."

"Glad to hear it; very glad. But—don't you think he would have got well just the same without the Ems water?"

"He might have. But it would have taken him twice the time, and required a stay in the country for a cure."

"You should then have earnestly recommended a cure

in the country; and we should have had to pay ten roubles less for the same result."

"Then what conclusion have you come to?" Vysocki asked excitedly, brushing his coat-lapels and twirling his moustache.

"Let me say first that I personally don't believe in all these drugs and medicines, nor in putting foreign bodies into the human organism. We can't afford it; that's one important point. And besides, it does no good; that's still more important. Leave sick men to nature: nature is the best doctor of all. And I should like you to follow this principle in future when you treat our people, for whose good I care more than for our own profit."

"All this you might have told me at the outset, and without so much ado!" Vysocki replied, his gorge rising.

"Well, I tell you then once more: we can't afford to go in for philanthropy."

"And I in turn tell you that—since I cannot leave the sick to be saved by nature alone, since I think it necessary to assist nature even by means of costly remedies, and since my conscience does not permit me to drive men to work before they are quite recovered—I may as well throw up my situation with your firm this very instant!"

"Why, Doctor, how unreasonable you are! We surely may talk things over, whatever they may be, openly and in a friendly way. Do sit down, do sit down, I beg. Take a cigarette, please!" So saying, Stanislas took the doctor's hat out of his hands, made him sit down again pretty nearly by force, placed a cigarette in his hand, and gave him a box of matches.

At that moment Shaya, who had just read a telegram, cried out joyfully: "Dr. Vysocki, my daughter is coming home to-day along with Miss Grünspan. I have now received a wire from Alexandrovo, and they want you to meet them at the station."

"The ladies have made haste on their way back. I understood they were not to arrive till Sunday."

"They are cracked!" Stanislas grumbled.

"It's a surprise. Mela wants to be here for Mrs. Travinska's name-day.—Well, will you go to the station?"

"With the utmost pleasure."

"Then perhaps you'll come with us at five; we shall go to the station together."

"Very well.—I am going to the infirmary now, but am returning directly."

Stanislas saw him out, and shook hands with a hearty squeeze at parting.

"You just let him alone, Stanislas," his father said. "He's Rose's protégé, and she has a weakness for the man."

"Let her; let her receive his visits, let her go for walks with him as much as she pleases; but why are we to spend money into the bargain on account of her?"

"Tut, tut, tut!—Phone to your house; say the children are to come. I'll take them to the station; they will have an airing, and I will get them some toys."

The attendant then solemnly announced the arrival of two ladies, to meet whom Stanislas made several steps forward, and Shaya rose to his feet. These were Mrs. Endelman and Mrs. Travinska, coming to beg on behalf of a fresh-air fund for sending workmen's children into the country.

Mrs. Endelman gave a splendid description of the misery of those multitudes of poor children doomed to rot in the sunless airless basements of the town. All the while she was fanning her much-powdered face very vigorously, and shifting her gold bracelets, and arranging her elaborately dressed hair, the words never ceased to flow from her livid lips, lips as worn as the stones of an ancient stairway.

Mrs. Travinska, who on that day looked more than usually beautiful, full of radiance and slender grace, kept glancing at Shaya's red-rimmed falcon's eyes and his flattened fingertips as he drummed impatiently upon the table; and now and then she would cast a look in Horn's direction.

"Royza, and what about your husband Berek? Does he give so very much to the poor?" Shaya cut in, tired of Mrs. Endelman's speech, and using her Yiddish names with malicious mockery.

This rudeness stung her to the quick. "He does, and is continually giving," she retorted; "but he never boasts of what he gives."

"Ah, well, I myself like people to know how much I give. —All right, you shall have a hundred roubles for your fresh-air fund. The children will get plenty of it for a hundred roubles.—Mr. Horn, here is an order for the sum; kindly cash it and bring the money here."

"If," Mrs. Travinska hinted, in a deep and singularly melodious voice, "you would be so good as to let us have a few remnants of cotton stuff that are not wanted, we should be very thankful; they would serve to make underwear for the children."

"What can they want with underclothing in the country? I have seen peasants' children on my estates running about almost without any clothes at all, yet they were in very good health."

"Mr. Knoll has given us five pieces of coloured cotton stuff."

"Knoll may give fifty if he chooses, but I cannot give more than six—I mean five," he corrected hurriedly—"pieces of white goods.—Stanislas, write an order for our warehouse manager to give out four pieces!" Shaya cried, in a very cross mood.

"We thank you most heartily in the name of all those poor little ones!"

"Oh, never mind about thanking. I am giving a hundred roubles and four pieces of white cotton stuff: but I'll ask you, ladies, to have this distinctly set down in the papers: that Shaya Mendelsohn has given one hundred roubles and four pieces of stuff to the fresh-air fund. I don't wish to brag, but I want people to know that I am kind-hearted."

Whereupon Mrs. Endelman proceeded to thank Shaya once more for his gift in florid terms, while Mrs. Travinska, turning to Horn, who had brought the money, said: "I have sent you an invitation to-day, but now I ask you again; pray come and see us to-morrow in the afternoon. You will not forget?"

"No indeed, and I shall be very much pleased to come."

When the ladies had gone, Stanislas remarked to Horn: "I say, you have first-rate acquaintances. This Mrs. Travinska is as nice as a box of sweets!"

"But that Royza looks like a cow with a powdered face! If her husband's intelligence were anything like her gift of the gab, they'd be twice as well off as they are," was old Shaya's verdict, as he went to meet a portly merchant, wearing a capote gathered into folds about the waist, and whose crafty eyes, very much aslant, told of Tartar blood. To him Shaya was extremely courteous, making him sit down in his own arm-chair; and Stanislas offered him a cigar, and struck a match to light it!

After him there came many and many another. Horn, who could scarcely wait till all were dispatched, then obtained leave from Shaya to go round the factory, and went to ask Adam Malinovski about his sister Sophy.

He found him in the great spinning-room, engaged on a machine that had to be repaired at once, while all the others were working at full speed.

A thin dust of cotton fibres filled the air with a greyish mist that blurred the shapes both of men and of machines, and settled down on everything there. Through the glass roof the sun poured down torrents of heat; the workmen's faces were streaming with sweat; and the air, heavily laden with smells of grease and oil, was close and oppressive.

"I am in the factory here with you from to-day on," Horn said.

"Ay, that's well," Adam replied in a low voice, bending over a part of the machinery which had just been screwed up. He said no more, for the men were just then very busy getting the whole in working order, oiling it and making trial starts, until it was connected with its transmission belt, and again began to work with the others.

Young Malinovski watched it in action for some time, then stopped it for a moment to examine the yarn it had spun; then, the result proving satisfactory, he went with Horn down the long lane of machines in motion.

"What about your sister? Did you see her at noon?" he presently asked his friend, shouting in his ear; the whirring and the humming of the machines and transmission bands, and the deep roar of the revolving wheels, made between them such a tempest of sounds that one voice could scarce be heard.

"No, no, no," he answered, sorrowfully.

They went into a small room, partitioned off by walls of glass, through which the whole of the chamber was visible, divided overhead by long lines of transmission pulleys, and beneath by the mobile contours of the machines, half hidden in the white haze of cotton dust.

"But what's amiss with you?" Horn blurted out, seeing Adam bite his lips and look moodily away into the main room.

"Nothing. What could there be amiss?"

He bent forward till his forehead touched the pane, his eyes absently fixed upon a wheel that revolved vertiginously, twinkling in the sunlight like a shield covered with silvery dust.

"Well, I must leave you.—Are you going straight home from here?"

"Do you know—she's gone!" He spoke calmly, but his lips trembled with suppressed sobs, and a dark shadow had come into his kindly, sea-green eyes.

"Gone?" Horn ejaculated vacantly.

"Gone. I had just dined, when the porter's wife brought me the key of your lodgings, saying that the girl who had been in my room had sent me word not to look for her, because she was not to be found.—You hear? She has gone to Kessler—to her lover!—Let her go!—let her do as she pleases!—she is nothing to me now.—Only I feel—a little pain—a little pain!"

Here he broke off and ran out; another spinning-machine had stopped. He hastened away to hide, not his "little pain," but the intolerable agony that tortured his heart and turned about in it, like the blade of a knife.

Horn followed him out, but was forced back to the wall,

the central passage being obstructed by a line of trucks all piled up with bales of raw cotton released from the iron hoops that had compressed them; and this cotton was being unloaded in front of the scratching- and carding-machines. As Adam did not rejoin him, and the heat was excessively great, and the noise of the machines and of the transmission belts, whirring and humming all round, dinned in his ears and grated on his nerves, Horn thought he would wait no longer, and went out.

Adam joined him at the entrance, and tearfully entreated him not to speak of the matter to anyone. He shook hands with Horn—his own was burning—and rushed away into that wilderness of machinery and noise, to lose amongst them his sense of shame and grief.

Horn had wanted to say some words of comfort to him, but found none to say, and felt that for such a wound time and silence were the only available remedies. Such sorrows feed on themselves, and must be left to wear themselves out.

In the yard he met Vysocki, just leaving the infirmary.

"Will you be at the Travinskis' to-morrow, Doctor?"

"I could not fail to be there. Theirs is the sole place in Lodz where something else besides gossip is talked."

"Yes, and theirs is the only *salon* to which not only millionaires go, but men."

But it was high time for them to part, Shaya's carriage having already pulled up outside the office.

Shaya was still within, playing with his grandchildren. Their father, Stanislas, busy writing, could only from time to time raise his head to smile at the little girls, whose auburn heads and rosy faces lay lovingly on his father's broad bosom. Shaya was an excellent playmate. He tossed them up and kissed them and laughed with them like a child; and those red-rimmed falcon's eyes were beaming with love and merriment.

"See, Doctor, what a torment it is to be a grandfather!" he said gaily to Vysocki.

"Very fine children."

"They are, aren't they? I always say so."

"They resemble Miss Rose, I think."

"Only their hair is like. For all the rest they are prettier by far."

"Well, we must be off; the train is due in eight minutes."

The nursery-governess, who was standing by the window at a respectful distance, took the little ones with her, and they all drove off.

Shaya's American horses were swift as the wind, yet they only arrived just in time, for the train was steaming into the station, chock-full of passengers.

Everybody made room for Shaya. Hats and caps flew off, a hush came over the crowd, and all eyes were turned with curiosity towards his tall imposing figure, attired in a long, grey coat. He stroked his beard, nodded to his acquaintances here and there, and walked on between two lines of bystanders who formed on either side of him, with the air of a king graciously pleased to look upon the crowd of poor people who so obsequiously let him pass.

Vysocki saw the faces of Rose and Mela looking out of the window of a first-class carriage, and darted forwards to meet them. Rose got down first, pulling after her a grey little monkey on a chain; it jumped about clumsily, and wanted every now and then to sit down on the platform.

"How are you, Rose? how are you?" her father cried. Rose kissed him; he pinched her under the chin, patting her cheek with the other hand, and said affectionately: "You are looking splendidly. I am so glad you are back again."

"Coco, come here; Coco!" she cried to her monkey, frightened by the crowd and the din; it pulled and jerked about wildly, till she had to take it up in her arms.

"Have you been wishing for our return?" Mela whispered to Vysocki, as they walked slowly to the carriage through the crowds at the entrance.

"For *your* return, Miss Grünspan"—he durst not say "Miss Mela" as yet—"I have been wishing for it during two long months," he added, overcome by the feeling that he at last saw her again.

"For two long, long months I too have been wanting to come back."

They were walking along side by side, and in the crush their hands met. But they said no more, for now they were close to the carriage.

Vysocki wanted to take his leave and get away; for the sight of Mela thrilled him with a strange delirious emotion that overpowered him. He felt so wonderfully happy to gaze at her, his eyes dim with joy and his heart throbbing so passionately that he was afraid lest he should betray what was within him. But they would not let him go.

He had to take a seat in front, opposite Mela. He saw wisps of her hair escaping from under her broad-brimmed straw hat, and her face, slightly sunburnt, of the hue of light-brown wine; and he looked at her so intently and ardently that she averted her face in confusion—a confusion, however, that she enjoyed so much that she burst into peals of merry laughter—at the antics of the monkey, which clung hard to Rose's shoulder and refused to go anywhere else. But occasionally she would snatch a swift glance at Vyoscki and then glance as swiftly away, flooded with a sensation of tremulous joy.

Rose alternately embraced the two little ones and fondled her monkey and told them of adventures they had met with on the way, so that she took no note at all of Mela's telltale beaming face.

"Aunt is not here! We have lost her!" she suddenly cried out, and stopped the carriage. She only then remarked the absence of Mela's aunt, who had been their chaperon during the journey.

"Back! We must return to the station!" Shaya commanded.

"Then, Miss Grünspan, I shall get down and look for your aunt," Vyoscki said, eagerly snatching the opportunity to escape, and jumping off as he spoke.

"That's very well; but you will have to bring Aunt with you and so come back to us."

"I shall call on Sunday. Both of you surely need rest, and

"I should be in the way," he added, with an appealing look at Mela.

"Well then—if you will have it so. But on Sunday we shall be expecting you in our 'Black Room,' at the usual time. And tell Bernard—and come along with him."

"He has gone to Paris."

"He does not matter much; of late he has been less entertaining than usual."

"When shall you say the same of me?"

"As to you, Mela shall decide."

"So much the worse for me!"

Their answer was lost to him. The horses had gone off full speed already; but he had caught a look in Mela's eyes which strongly contradicted what he had said, and made his heart beat with intense agitation.

He found Mela's aunt waiting, amongst piles of suit-cases and trunks, for the porters to take charge of the heavy luggage. He gave her what help he could, and went so far as absent-mindedly to kiss her hand on putting her into a cab. After which he lingered for some time on the steps outside the station, quite absorbed in the new world of feeling which opened before him now. His imagination was full of the radiance of Mela's beauty, and fired by the memory of the warm pressure of her hand, and by her glances, instinct with keen intellectual comprehension.

After a time, finding himself unable to realize in distinct thought the meaning of all his multifarious sensations, and urged away by a subconscious craving after solitude, he went outside the town to wander along a street which had only just been marked out for building. Its track, as laid out, ran across fields of rye, amongst which only a few houses and factories were conspicuous.

"I love her; yes, I do love her!" he said to himself as he came to a standstill, his eyes fixed on a line of windmills that crowned a stretch of rising ground, with vanes slowly lifted up, like wearied arms, then dropping down again heavily, on a background of bright sky.

He turned off into a field of oats, whose darkly shining

billows came rolling up to a barrier of tawny-coloured rye that, bowing low before them, scattered to the breeze the rust-coloured pollen of its bread-scented flowers. Beyond the field of rye lay wide expanses of greensward, with grey little houses, their windows twinkling in the sun. Larks soared up from the ground just before his feet, and their songs rang out sonorously in the cloudless sky.

He gazed up at their flickering wings until they disappeared in the blue space. And then he went on his way, overflowing with an immense gladness of life, of breath, of movement, and with his breast full of the same undying potency as radiated from out the young grass, as shone in the azure eyes of the corn-flowers, as streamed forth from the wild depths of the rye, and was heard in the rippling, rustling corn, in the trills of the grasshoppers, in the caressing whispers of the breezes.

He had so intense a realization of this that his eyes grew moist with tears of infinite tenderness. He plucked blades of corn by handfuls to cool his burning lips; and so went walking on, not knowing whither, till he came to a low-roofed hut that blocked the way. It was half ruined; and in front of it, under the shadow of a great birch-tree, a man lay upon a scanty couch of straw. His head was resting on a low pillow, covered with check cotton print; his eyes were upon the delicate tracery of the boughs which hung overhead like cascades of verdure; and he was chanting in a thin weak voice, almost like the humming of many gnats:

"Sing, my lips, her praises sing.—Sing that Holy Maiden
Whom the Lord eternally—Hath with blessings laden!"*

* This is the beginning of the Office of the Immaculate Conception, which, translated from Latin into Polish, is extremely popular amongst the peasants; almost everywhere the whole office is sung before high mass on Sundays, to a strange weird chant that is like none I ever heard. I subjoin the Latin original of the two lines given:

*Eia, mea labia—nunc annuntiate
Laudes et præconia—Virginis beatæ.*

—Translator's Note.

Vysocki stood rooted to the spot. The man's voice was as the bubbling of water running over pebbles; often it would break off, but then once more rose stronger, and sank again, till it ended in a long, low sigh and a gurgling sound like a death-rattle. He then would run the beads of an enormous rosary through his fingers, and kiss the metal crucifix at the end of it, and eye the wall of standing rye that bent forward to him with rustling ears and stalks, and, quivering there for an instant, drew back again; while in front of the hut the tall stalks of mullein also bowed towards him, looking with pale-yellow eyes upon that expanse of fallow-coloured waves, over which there floated a haze of pollen.

"What ails you?" Vysocki asked in country dialect, sitting down beside him.

"Nothing, sir, nothing ails me; only I am dying—dying piecemeal," the sick man answered, speaking slowly, with no apparent surprise at the other's appearance, and looking up to him with sad grey eyes like the clouded sky that just then overcanopied them.

"But what is your illness?" the doctor asked, moved by the man's resignation.

"It is death, sir; it is—this"—drawing aside the rags that covered him; and Vysocki saw that both legs had been cut off well above the knees, and enveloped in dirty bandages.

"The factory bit off both my feet up to the ankles; then the doctors cut my legs off as far as the knees. But death came on all the same; and they cut them off further and further up; but death came on still and is still coming on. Yes, it is coming, and will be with me soon, as I pray Our Merciful Lord and His Most Holy Mother." And he kissed the crucifix at the end of his rosary.

"And do you feel no more pain?"

"None, sir, none; and what pain could I feel? My legs are gone, my flesh is no more, my arms are wasted away. See!" And he showed him two bones just covered with skin the colour of ashes, and ending in hands so terribly emaciated

that they resembled the boughs of a dry plum-tree that stood by the hut.

"There's yet a little breath left within me; but when it passes out—which may the Lord Jesus grant soon!—then shall a man have such rest as befits a Christian."

His utterance was feeble and slow, with frequent pauses; and over his thin face, as grey as the earth he was lying on, there came a smile, like the last gleam of a day that is ending.

"Who is there to attend on you? Who sees to your wants?"

"The Lord Jesus is there to attend on me; my wife sees to my wants. All day long she is away at work in the factory; in the evening she comes and takes me into the hut, and cooks food for me."

"Have you any children?"

"We had." His voice sank lower, and his eyes grew moist. "Four of them. Ay, four. A machine tore Antek's head from his body. Marysia, Yagna, and Voytek died of the ague—all of them!"

He was silent for a while, gazing with glassy eyes beyond the rippling corn that surrounded his hut. Over his ashen-grey features, stamped with the stony apathy of the peasant, there flashed an expression of agony as though a nail had been driven into his heart.

"Oh, that dunghill!" he groaned aloud, shaking his fist at the town, whose roofs and chimneys were seen afar, looming above the cornfields.

"Let me see your legs," Vysocki said, and instantly proceeded to unwind the rags that bound them, in spite of the terrified peasant's strong protests. Seeing they were of no use, he desisted, only staring wildly at the doctor.

Gangrene had set in beyond all hope, but the man's organism was so utterly exhausted that it only advanced by very slow degrees. Vysocki's heart was wrung with compassion. He brought water from a little well, washed the wounds, and treated them with a solution of carbolic acid that he always carried with him, but could not replace the same bandages;

they were too filthy to be used, soaked as they were with purulent matter and dried blood.

"Have you no rags that are clean?"

Too deeply moved to speak, he shook his head.

Then Vysocki, on the spur of the moment, took off his own shirt, tore it into strips, and bandaged the sufferer's legs with them. The peasant said no word, but his bosom and all his body moved and heaved convulsively, and a violent fit of choking sobs clutched him by the throat.

All was done. Vysocki dressed himself in a hurry, pulled up the collar of his dust-coat, and bent over the poor man, saying: "Farewell for the present; to-morrow I shall see you again."

"O Jesus, my beloved, O Jesus!" the poor creature cried out, and all the gratitude of his simple peasant's soul burst forth. He crawled from his couch—all that was left of him—to fall at the doctor's feet, embracing them and pressing them to his breast.

"O good kind sir! Holy one! Angel of God!" he sobbed, intensely thankful for the comfort afforded him; and his tears flowed down in streams.

Vysocki put him back on his couch, forbade him to move, wiped away his tears, smoothed down his hair, dishevelled and bathed in sweat, and fled hurriedly, as if ashamed of what he had done.

The other watched him disappear amidst the corn, looked all round him, crossed himself in amazement at what had come to pass, and for a long while gazed in dull stupefaction at the billowy rye, at the birch-boughs tossing overhead, at the bands of sparrows flying to and fro, and at the sun, which now hung low above the fields. Then he raised his head a little, and began to sing, in a voice choked with tears:

"Sing, my lips, her praises sing—Sing that Holy Maiden
Whom the Lord eternally—Hath with blessings laden!

"I will moan now no longer. Thou hast had mercy upon

me, O Jesus! Now death is coming—is coming—” he repeated feebly, more feebly still, seeing as through a mist the waves of corn, rustling as they made obeisance before him, and the greyish azure of heaven, that seemed descending to wrap him round—and that kind good dear sun, that with its last fading beams was sending him a kiss.

CHAPTER VII



OROVIECKI, Horn, and Max Baum went together to Mrs. Travinska's; she had arranged a great party to be given on her name-day. Nina came to meet them at the door, clad in a dress of thin white silk, which set off her delicate transparent complexion very well, reminding one of the faint pink petals of a camellia. Her eyes, greenish, with gold specks, gleamed as brightly as the diamonds in the rosy lobes of her ears; and her luxuriant chestnut hair, dressed *à la Grecque*, formed, as it were, a crown of gold, set on a lovely head that resembled a cameo subtly carved in pale Sicilian coral.

"I have a very pleasing surprise for you," she said to Charles.

"All the more a surprise, since you say it is pleasing, madam," Charles answered with a touch of irony, endeavouring to look over her shoulder and into the *salon*.

"You may guess, but please do not look," she said, placing herself between him and the door.

But at that very moment Anne's smiling face peeped out from behind the cherry-coloured hangings, and she came in to meet them.

"Well, as I have failed to surprise you, I may leave you both together, and only take these gentlemen with me," said Mrs. Travinska, turning to Max and Horn, with whom she left the room.

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning; and I came over here with Mrs. Vysocka."

"Well, what news from home? And how is Father?" he inquired, but not with much show of interest.

Then, taking her by the hand, he went with her to the

window. "You see those walls yonder? They are the walls of my factory—of yours," he said, pointing beyond the glass roofs of Travinski's spinning-mill, to where some brickwork rose amidst high scaffoldings.

"I have seen them already. As soon as I came, Nina took me to the end of the yard, and showed me your factory through the railings. She told me, too, how very, very much you are working all day long. But really you must not over-work yourself; you must not!"

"I am sorry to say, on the contrary, I must. To-day, for instance, we have been busy ever since dawn. Had to pay the workmen."

"Father sends you two thousand roubles by me."

"Where can he have got the money from?" Charles asked, as he pocketed the notes.

"It was a secret hoard. When you wrote him about the trouble you were in, and how you were forced to borrow, he put it in my hands and told me to bring it here to you. I came here for no other purpose, I assure you," she added, considerably confused, and changing colour; for she had got the money by pawning all her jewellery, and other means—sales of which his father alone knew; but she was sure he never would tell.

"Anne, I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. The money could not have come in at a better moment."

"I am so glad—so very glad of it!" she said, greatly delighted.

"And how very kind of you to have brought it yourself!"

"You see, it would have taken more time to send it by post," she replied, pleased to be speaking the literal truth. "And I could not bear the thought of your working so hard and being in such difficulties, when I could manage everything so easily."

"Easily! You may think it an easy thing, but nobody else would have done so."

"Because no one else loves you as Father does—and as I

do!" she added, boldly, with such a look of love, so sincere and simple, gleaming from beneath her jet-black brows, that he too, in a mood of sincere affection, seized her hand, kissed it passionately, and tried to take her in his arms.

"No, Charles, you must not—somebody might come in," she exclaimed, extricating herself from his embrace, turning away her flushed face, and firmly closing her lips, which trembled with excitement.

When they entered the *salon*, already filled with people and with talk, Nina smiled pleasantly at Anne, seeing such radiance of joy on her pretty face and in her bluish-grey eyes.

That day Anne was really charming; the knowledge that she had been able to assist her beloved, and that her "darling boy" had shown himself so kind and so affectionate to her, made her eyes sparkle with delight, and everybody was struck with her good looks.

She could not remain seated, she longed to get out into the garden or some solitary field to sing aloud for sheer happiness; and following her impulse, she went out of the house. But the yard was paved with stones, and had red brick buildings all round, and an ocean of houses beyond. So she returned to the *salon*, and finding Nina, walked about with her, arm in arm, in close friendship.

"What a baby you are—Anne, what a baby!"

"Because I feel so happy to-day," she answered impetuously, her eyes fixed on Charles, conversing with Mada Müller and Mela Grünspan, by whose side Vysocki was sitting.

"Hush, little one; they may overhear you. You should not trumpet your love so loud as that."

"But I neither can nor care to conceal it. Is love a thing to be ashamed of?"

"Ashamed of? No.—But we should keep it well hidden in our hearts, out of sight of the herd."

"But why?"

"That it should never be marred by the glance of a jealous, or a malicious, or an apathetic eye. I do not show a stranger

even my bronzes or my best pictures. I fear lest they may not feel all their beauty, lest their gaze soil them and take something from their loveliness. And far less would I suffer them to look into my soul."

"But again, why?" said Anne, who could not realize the sensitive-plant delicacy of Nina's soul.

"Because there are many whom I do not count as men; yes, even some among to-day's guests here—manufacturers, capitalists, specialists in various industrial lines: men whose aim, and whose only aim in life is to do business and make money. For them the ideas of love, of a soul, of the good, of the beautiful, and so on—are drugs in the market, or like unsigned notes of hand."

Here Nina broke off to meet Mrs. Endelman, who was entering the *salon* with so imposing a mien that she attracted general attention. A few paces behind her walked a couple of handsome young girls, both dressed alike, who formed her retinue.

One held her lady's handkerchief, the other her fan. They both made a sweeping bow to the company with the stiffness of automata, and were exclusively attentive to every gesture of their lady, who did not even deign to introduce them to her hostess. She simply dropped into an easy-chair, and, having first put up a lorgnette with a long tortoise-shell handle, commenced in loud shrill tones to express her admiration of Nina's beauty, of the numbers of her guests, and of her drawing-room, beckoning at intervals, with the gesture of a monarch, to one or the other of the girls who formed her suite—her maids-of-honour—for fan or pocket-handkerchief.

"She does look like a queen. Like Mary—Mary Magdalen," said Grosplik.

"You mean Maria Theresa, no doubt," Kurovski whispered.

"It's all the same.—Ah, Endelman, how are you getting on? How much does this mummary amount to?" the banker queried. Endelman had slipped in quietly after his wife, and was now modestly exchanging greetings with his fellow guests.

"I am well, Grosplik. What?" he said, putting his hand up like an ear-trumpet.

"Mr. Boroviecki, do you know when Moritz Welt is to be back here again?" said Grosplik.

"He has not said a word about that to me. Nor written either."

"I am rather uneasy; something may have happened to him."

"Oh, he'll not kick the bucket," Charles replied flippantly.

"Well, but I sent him an order for thirty thousand marks. Now a week has gone by, and he's not back yet. What am I to think? There are so many rascals about——"

"What are you driving at?" Charles asked, impressed by his manner.

"At the possibility of his having been robbed or murdered. 'A rouble is harder to come by than a mishap any day,' " he remarked sententiously in conclusion, with a heavy sigh; for he was really disquieted and upset concerning his thirty thousand, and knew Welt too well to put suspicions lightly aside.

"Mary, since Mrs. Travinska begs you, don't hold back. You can play beautifully; do so!" was Grosplik's advice to his daughter, whom Mrs. Travinska had asked to play.

Mary, a very thin girl with salient hip-bones and an inordinately tiny mouth, sat down to the piano, and listlessly struck the keys; her sallow, pimply complexion, red nose, and lean, long arms somehow made one think of a plucked frozen goose, wrapped up in white silk.

She played some sonata or other, uncommonly long and tedious, with the effect of shortly setting everyone talking, her father, Grosplik, the loudest. He had been told by Endelman how Bernard had turned Protestant, and was indignant at the news.

"I said the fellow would end badly! He wanted to pose as a philosopher, as a decadent, and he turns out to be simply a sneak. And why go in for Protestantism? I thought he had more gumption in him. It's all the same to me, his having gone over to another religion; a Jew, whether he

turns Catholic, or Protestant, or Mohammedan, always and in every case remains a Jew."

"Don't you approve of Protestantism?" said Kurovski, whose hazel eyes were following Anne, walking with Nina about the room.

"No, I do not, and wouldn't turn Protestant on any account. I am a man who loves beautiful things, and who needs them. When I have worked hard all the week, and the sabbath has come round, I require some place to go to—a grand place, with fine paintings, artistic sculptures, a splendid ritual, and a good concert, or part of one. I admire your ceremonies exceedingly; they are æsthetic in their colouring, in the fragrance of their perfumes, the sounds of the tinkling bells, the lights, the chants. Then, if I must hear a sermon, I don't want a disagreeable one. Let me have things of the higher life spoken of in picturesque language; that is ennobling, that gives a man a comforting sensation and a taste for life. But what do I find in a Protestant church? Four bare walls, quite bare, as if the whole business were going into liquidation. And to crown all, in comes their clergyman and preaches. What do you think he talks about? Hell and other subjects quite as offensive at least. Thank you, no! I'm not going to church to have my nerves shattered. I am no callous boor, I am a highly strung man, and don't care to be harrowed by a troublesome babbler. And then besides, I want to know with whom I am going to do business. Protestantism—what sort of a firm is that? The Pope! Ah, that's a firm indeed——"

There came no reply from Kurovski. He had walked away, and gone to sit near a small group of ladies, where he was studying Nina and Anne with a strange intensity of attention. Arm in arm they threaded the suite of rooms with leisurely steps, stopping before the nosegays and lilies of the valley which stood at every window, bending over the flowers, breathing their delicate aroma, and then passing on—fair spring flowers, both of them!

Occasionally Nina would touch with her lips the cool petals of the lilies of the valley, and pass her closed lids

over their snow-white bells, let her fingers glide along the artistic curves of the limbs of the nymphs of bronze, who were seen gazing down into the flower-filled amphoræ they were holding. And then those two would walk on, deep in quiet conversation, unconscious that Mrs. Endelman with her maids-of-honour was following them and not without envy gazing at her rooms, so simply, yet so exquisitely fitted up. On seeing the large mosaic which Nina had purchased earlier in the spring hanging from the wall in a wide-bordered frame, she stood absolutely dazed.

"Oh, how very beautiful! What colours! And what an admirable polish!" she cried enraptured and blinking her eyes in the sun's glare, reflected from the glittering surface.

"She is ridiculous, that cannot be denied; but her heart is all right. She's president of quite a number of benevolent associations, and does a great deal of good to the poor."

"She does, but because she wants people to think well of her," Max Baum said, overhearing Kurovski's remark, and replying to it.

Meanwhile there was much more room in the main *salon*; large numbers of callers had come, offered their good wishes, looked round at the rooms, and gone away. Only about twenty guests remained, all belonging to Polish society, and at the head of the intelligentsia of the town. These, as the men with the money-bags drifted away, came forward and took the places left vacant in the drawing-room.

Only a few who were not Poles stayed; that is, only the Müllers, on good terms with the Travinskis, and Mela Grünspan, with her aunt, who had several times, but to no purpose, called out to her: "Mela! don't you want to go home yet?"

Max Baum had already done so, but Mela felt unable, though she had wished to for some time—certain bitter words from Mrs. Vysocka's lips having lashed her like a whip. With nerves unstrung, she was still sitting in the same place, talking to Mada, laughing at times or telling about her trip to Italy, all the while but half conscious of what she was saying. She felt a strangely feverish and painful

desire to abandon all her previously cherished hopes and dreams.

Vysocki had spoken several times to her; she had seen the love beaming in his eyes, heard his voice, soft and low, saying to her things which the day before she would have welcomed with ecstasy; they only gave her a deep sense of pain and sorrow to-day. For it was to-day, and in Nina's splendid *salon*, that she had first become aware, with the profound intuition of love, that she never could, nay, that she ought not to, marry Vysocki.

At that instant of clear vision, terribly conscious of the barrier which separated them, she was overcome with apprehension. She stared vacantly at those around her, seeking Vyoscki's smiling face and bright eyes, hoping to find in them something that might drive away those thoughts which assailed her in burning, hateful swarms; but he was too strongly enamoured, too joyful of humour; and in too congenial company besides, to guess at her present disposition of mind.

He was just then, together with Travinski, Kurovski, and some other young men, eagerly expounding his altruistic views about society and its needs, mechanically brushing his coat-lapels, twirling his moustache, pulling down his shirt-cuffs, and rejoicing to have found intelligent listeners and left for a while the dull topics of everyday factory life; and he soared delightedly into the regions of arguments and conjectures.

"Why is this so?" Mela thought, with a dull pang, and could not make clear to her own mind why such horrible thoughts had come down on her, flooding her heart with bitterness unspeakable. One thing, however, was clear to her: the world of him she loved, of Kurovski, Travinski, and Boroviecki, the world of those things they were now discussing and of the ideas in which they took such warm interest—the whole world, in short, of the Polish intellectual life which she loved so much—was quite different from and foreign to her own world. "Our people—*my* people!—have

nothing in common with them," she said to herself, as she watched the clear-cut intellectual features of Travinski, who was protesting against Vysocki's views so vehemently that he had turned quite pale, and the delicate network of his blue veins stood out on an ivory background. And then, as she turned her eyes on Mrs. Vysocka and Nina and Anne, sitting together, a group of well-bred women of exquisite charm, speaking in subdued tones—there came to her mind's eye the home she lived in—her father—her sisters—her brother-in-law—and she now at last realized perforce all the offensiveness of tone, all the meanness of life, of her own circle.

Now at last did she see that she would—and for ever—know herself a stranger and an intruder from another sphere, scarcely to be borne with, and if at all, simply on account of the fortune she would bring to her husband.

"Never; never!" she said proudly, and was about to rise and leave the house.

Her aunt had once more crept up to her, asking, in a husky singsong drawl: "Mela, don't you want to come home now?"

Making a great appeal to her will-power, she went so far as to rise from her chair—to go—away—out of the world she was in—never, nevermore to return! Though she loved him with all her soul, she felt she must renounce him, never to see him again.

"Never, never!" she repeated between her set teeth. She remembered but too well the lot of those amongst her own people whom she had known who had married Poles; their humiliations, even before their own children, who reproached their mothers for the Jewish blood in their veins; and the barrier of scornful amenity or of slighting depreciation always making them strangers to their nearest and dearest.

"Are you going then? Why so soon?" Vysocki cried, standing in her way.

"I do not feel well, I am still fatigued after my journey,"

she answered, not looking at him, and fighting down with all her might the sobs that shook her bosom, and the desire to stay that welled up within her at his words.

"I hoped you would stay till evening; that we should afterwards go to see Rose and that you would give up these hours to me. Why, for two whole months we have seen nothing at all of each other!" he said in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"I remember, I remember!—Two months!" she returned; and suddenly her heart was filled with such a glowing intensity both of love and of pain that her eyes glistened with tears, and her bosom heaved violently.

"And now," he added, "we shall be more at ease; only our own people are here."

"Then I certainly ought to go; I should be too much in the way," she rejoined in hard whisper.

"Mela!" he exclaimed reproachfully, but in such a soft and tender voice that her strength gave way; all her resolves, just taken, melted into thin air; she felt her heart swelling with unbounded happiness, and a quiet sense of immense love.

"You will remain, won't you?" he continued to implore her; and seeing that she did not answer, but looked helplessly in the direction of Mrs. Vysocka, whose piercing eyes she felt were upon her, he addressed the same petition to Nina.

"Madam, can you not get Miss Melanie to stay longer with us?"

Nina had learned all about the affair from Mrs. Vysocka, and had felt rather unfavourably disposed towards Mela. But when she saw how sad she looked, she felt much compassion for her; her heart beat with strong sympathy, and she entreated her to stay.

After some opposition Mela consented, though there was still a strong conflict between her heart and her mind. "It is for the last time!" she reminded herself; but, seized in the grasp of love, enchanted by Vysocki's utterances (he never for a moment left her, nor cared what his mother might think)—and far from insensible to the friendliness of Nina

and of Anne, who seated her between them and behaved with the utmost cordiality—she quite forgot that this time was the last, and imagined it was to be the first, and should continue for ever and ever.

This reception into the circle of the elect took a good deal of time, for as soon as twilight came, dinner was served in the great *salon* with oaken wainscots; these (there being no other ornament in the room) were adorned all round with a wide space of inlaid work as border, half-way up the walls. Along this border were wreathed vine-stalks and leaves and tendrils; not without clusters of purple grapes that hung from the mouths of comic masks, carved out of gilt box-wood.

Great cordiality prevailed all through the meal, and several toasts were drunk with much applause. They were even in such good spirits that Müller, having proposed Travinski's health, would have made a speech, but that he was slightly flustered, and Mada, who sat next to Baum, was unable to prompt him; so he only stammered out a few words and sat down again to wipe his red, perspiring face upon his sleeve.

"I'd like to put him in my menagerie; he's a droll enough specimen," Kessler muttered, turning to Mela, at his side.

She did not catch his words, being attentive to what Vysocki was saying. She felt besides an invincible repugnance for that bat-like head and those yellow eyes, perpetually leering at Anne, who sat between him and Boroviecki.

Perhaps Mada Müller was of all the company the only one to feel out of humour. She paid little heed to Max, trying to entertain her. Her eyes were constantly fixed on Charles and Anne. Seeing them on such good terms with each other, she asked Max softly: "Is that young lady Mr. Boroviecki's sister—she who is sitting next to him? They are a good deal like each other."

"She's his distant cousin, but also his intended wife," Max rejoined, with a stress on the last words.

"His intended wife? I—never knew—that Mr. Boroviecki had a fiancée——"

"Why, they have been engaged for a whole year, and are very fond of each other," Max said, with some exaggeration; Mada's lack of perspicacity, and her evident adoration for Charles, set his teeth on edge.

Mada's golden eyelashes, fluttering like a bird's wings, fell, heavily shading her azure eyes; her face turned from a deep flush to an extreme pallor, and her wan lips quivered strangely. Max saw this sudden change with astonishment, but could not watch her any longer, a servant whispering in his ear that someone had come to speak with him.

It was Joe, who, as soon as Max came out to him, told him point-blank that his mother was no more.

"What? what's that?" Max cried again and again, not believing his own ears; he turned round and round, took some random steps to and fro; once more, staring at Joe, heard him, all in tears, terrified and trembling, repeat the evil news—and instantly rushed out of the house.

CHAPTER VIII



NO one in the dining-room, with the exception of Nina, had remarked Max's exit.

"What has come over Mr. Baum?" Mada inquired.

"Am I my partner's keeper, unless he has got hold of my money?" Boroviecki returned flippantly. He was glad that the said partner's eyes no longer watched Anne, or his own conversation with Mada, who was much pained at the news of Charles's betrothal, and tried to induce her father to come away.

But old Müller was in a jovial humour that evening; he put his arm round Boroviecki, and called out with vulgar jocularity: "You silly Mada, here's a young man for you; don't be in such a hurry to run off!"

And so he left them both sitting together, and not a little embarrassed. Mada's head sank forwards on her breast, while she put her gloves on with elaborate care, listening all the time to the sound of his voice, which had always enchanted her, but now seemed as sad and melancholy as its reverberations in her own heart—so sad that she was afraid she should break down and cry.

"You are out of sorts this evening; what's the cause?" Charles asked in an undertone.

Mada made no answer, but, concealing under her handkerchief the agitation on her face and her efforts to keep her tears back, she raised her eyes to his and gazed long into them, till he impatiently repeated his question.

"Oh, your fiancée is seeking you," she said, with a glance towards Anne, then looking round the room.

Charles, in no very good temper, made his way to her.

"Mr. Charles, Mrs. Vysocka wants to go now; will you accompany us?"

He then very ceremoniously took leave of Mada, whose eyes followed him out through the suite of rooms.

"Then, Miss Mela, we too shall go," Vysocki said, and at once set out to find her aunt, dozing in one of the empty rooms.

"We are leaving; will you come with us?" Mrs. Vysocka said to him.

"I am afraid not. I must see Miss Grünspan home."

"Miss Grünspan! Can no one else accompany her?"

"No one," he replied in decided tones.

Their eyes met in conflict. Hers sparkled resentfully; his gleamed with calm determination.

"Will you be home soon? Anne is with us, and Boro-viecki too; shall supper wait for you?"

"I could not possibly arrive in time; I have to see the Mendelsohns later."

"Well, please yourself, please yourself." She forced the words out with difficulty, suppressing all she felt.

He did not guess at her state, and went to help Mela put her things on. They started at once, for her carriage was waiting.

"Shall we drive to Rose now?"

"Yes, yes, wherever you choose," he rejoined warmly, "even to the end of the world!"

"Words fly farther than wishes, wishes than possibilities," she murmured, feeling the peace of a happy and uninterrupted evening steal over her, recalling her to reality and the resolution she had so recently taken.

"No. I do not withdraw my words. Take me, and lead me to the very confines of possibility!"

His hand trembled as it slipped into hers.

"Well, for the present I take you no farther than to Rose," she said, returning the pressure of his hand, and keeping it in hers.

"And afterwards?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

Hers were fixed on the fast-trotting horses, as she replied: "I shall let you know to-morrow."

Her aunt was taking a nap and nodding in the front seat. In silence they sat together, each glad to face the wind that blew; the carriage rolled to and fro violently, and the india-rubber tires rebounded like balls from the ruts and holes in the pavement.

They both knew that the crisis, the decisive moment, was at hand; that in a second the one word, so long hid within their hearts, yet always expected, would find utterance at last. Each was looking at the other with a clear, steadfast gaze that penetrated to the innermost depths of their souls; and every instant of that gaze brought them nearer and into closer union.

Mela had not forgotten her resolve; she still realized all its inevitability, and with all the bitterness of regret. Notwithstanding, she gave herself up with delight to the torrent of feeling that carried them both away, heart and brain, with a sense of resistless joy. With tremulous expectation she awaited his avowal; she knew he was about to declare all the love that surged up in his heart. She had now an irresistible craving to drink the cup of happiness to its last—its very last drop. She was fain to follow the lead of her frenzy, not caring what must happen on the morrow, or, rather, because she was aware what that morrow would bring. The phantom of the future was haunting her, setting before her mind the harsh reality which was in store; but she waved it from her, determined to forget all for the short space of that one evening.

She held his hand still, now and then pressing it to her palpitating breast, or passing it over her hot brow and nestling close to his side with a far-away, radiant look.

Bending forward, so near to her that his lips almost brushed her face, he whispered: "Mela!"

That one word, that one thrilling sound, penetrated her like a burning blade. Her eyes closed, her heart throbbed impetuously within her, like the wild flapping of a frantic

bird; and so mightily did this flood of gladness rush over her that she could not speak—only smile faintly, just with the corners of her mouth.

"Mela! Mela!" he said again in yet softer tones and a voice that had greatly changed, stretching out his hands from beneath his mantle, clasping her, gathering her to him in a strong embrace.

This embrace she took so passively that their bosoms met and touched. But the next instant she brusquely disengaged herself, and, pressing back with all her strength against the carriage cushions, whispered in a scarce audible voice: "Hush, be still!" Her face was deadly pale; she could hardly breathe.

"Mela, do you want to go straight home?" her aunt asked her, waking up suddenly; but she had to repeat the question several times before her niece understood.

"No, Aunt, but you may go on home. We shall stop at the Mendelsohns' and visit Rose."

They got out at the Mendelsohns' palace, where Rose came out to meet them in the hall, regarding them with curiosity, but receiving with a very cynical expression the kisses showered on her by Mela.

"Are you alone?" Vysocki inquired, trying vainly to unclasp his mantle with trembling hands, and attempting to hang up his hat where there was no hat-rack.

"Not at all; Coco is with me," she said, and, with the usual swing of her broad hips, led the way to the Black Room.

"Why, where does this singing come from?" Vysocki said. From Shaya's quarters upstairs there came a monotonous melody that floated downstairs.

"Oh, that's in Father's room. He has people chanting like that at present daily. It makes me afraid. For several months, and ever since Bucholc's death, he has been continually at prayers; and singers come here every day from the synagogue to chant something religious or other. This is quite abnormal. Besides, he has told Stanislas lately that he intended, before he died, to found a great home for the old people crippled in our factory. It's an unfavorable symptom

—very; and so Stanislas has wired to Vienna for a doctor to come over here—a specialist.”

“Yes, that’s very curious,” Vysocki said, but he had not at all caught her meaning. He trembled with excitement, and his eyes followed Mela, who was entering a boudoir close by.

“Why are you both wool-gathering? Has your mutual love hatched out at last?”

“Almost—almost. But, Miss Mendelsohn, you will give me help, won’t you?”

“Miss Mendelsohn will not!”

“Then Rose!—you so good, so kind, so beloved by us! you will help me, surely?”

“Do you then love her so very much? Tell me,” she said, wiping his clammy brow with her handkerchief.

Then he set to depicting his love in so vehement an outburst that she was absolutely stupefied. She had never suspected him of such burning affection, and listened first with sympathetic interest, and at last with an indefinite sense of injury in her mind; so that, when Mela came in and sat down by them, Rose got up and went out, taking the monkey along with her.

“I heard what you said to Rose,” Mela told him with a tender glance; and without giving him time to say anything more, took him in her arms, and with hot thirsty lips pressed a long, passionate, fiery kiss on his.

“Oh, how I love you!” she gasped, pausing for a moment.

Their voices then broke off, hushed and still. Holding each other close, breast to breast in a madly passionate embrace, they strained one to the other, mouth to mouth, with hearts that ceased from beating, and with unseeing eyes. And then he told her the whole history of his love in a strangled broken voice that showed all the ardour he felt.

She leant back upon the sofa, set her feet on a footstool, and in that half-reclining posture listened to his words. Even when he said he would go at once to see her father to-morrow and ask for her hand; and when at last, somewhat exhausted,

he sat down on some cushions at her feet and laid his head upon her lap, and with dim eyes looking up to her began to weave the marvellous web of their future bliss, she said not a word to interrupt him, but drank her full of that sweet intoxicating cup, her breast heaving with excess of gladness. And she gazed on him, her eyes moist with unbounded happiness, and her lips blossoming out into a strange melancholy smile. But she did not break in. Only from time to time, she drew him near her, kissed his eyes, and said: "I love you! Speak on, my darling; let me be beside myself this evening, let me be distracted!"

So he went on speaking—singing the whole sweet symphony of love, and never noticing the entrance of Rose, who had come in, sat down quietly on the sofa, put her arm round Mela's neck, and laid her auburn head of hair on her friend's bosom, whilst her ears were listening to him and her pale-green eyes feasting upon him.

And thus they continued to weave their web of love and ecstasy. The whole world was for them non-existent, and as though men, and realities, and everything, had fallen into the gulf of oblivion, hidden deep in the vague mist which was around them and in them. Words, looks, thoughts, flashed like lightning from one to the other, all trembling with the excess of their emotions, and sank with ineffable sweetness into each other's heart.

All round them the stillness was deep. No sound came in from the street; the room, dimly lit with one electric lamp, induced a pleasing drowsiness, together with its enervating perfume of crimson roses, a great cluster of which glowed in a bronze vase near a wall.

They had almost given over speaking now. But Rose, who sat motionless beside them, began to move spasmodically; she tried to fight with her sobs and keep back her tears, but could not. She flung herself down on the carpet, and burst into weeping and lamentation:

"Why does no one love me? Why, why does no one love me? Have not I, too, the right to be happy? And I too can love—and long so to be loved!" Such was the bitter cry of

her soul, and such the sore spasm of anguish that wrung her heart.

Mela could do nothing to comfort her; nor indeed was the attempt even possible. Those tears of Rose were too sharp and hard a reminder of the inexorable truth—of the terrible reality.

Vysocki had risen, wishing to take his leave; and on departing he once more reminded Mela that he was going to call on her father the next morning.

"There's one thing I must remind you of—I am a Jewess," she pointed out to him.

"That I remember. But to me it makes no difference, if you love me and are willing to embrace Christianity."

"For your sake I'd willingly embrace martyrdom itself!" she cried.—"Let's not speak of that; I shall see Father to-morrow, and write to you directly. Wait for my letter, and do not come till you get it."

She spoke on the spur of the moment, using a subterfuge. She lacked both strength and courage to tell him then and there that she never could be his wife. No. She could not have told him now; not for anything in the world.

To-morrow, ah, to-morrow!—To-day, more kisses, more caresses, still more glamour! And yet more of this love, so strong, so sweet, so intoxicating—yet once, once more!

"One instant more, my dearest! one instant only," she implored him, as they walked together through the darkened rooms and into the vestibule. "Do you not feel how hard it is for me to tear myself away from your side?"

The fear that had now taken hold of her—the fear lest she never should see him again—was so strong that she clung to him desperately and threw herself into his arms. And so they stood, lips glued to lips, joined together in a close embrace, and unable to part.

But, prolong the leave-taking how they would, the moment of departure was drawing ever nearer.

Mela, shuddering in intense agitation, crept closer and closer to his bosom, whispering sorrowfully again and again: "A little while. . . . Yet a little while!"

"But, Mela, we shall meet to-morrow! And afterwards, every day we shall meet!"

"Yes—every day—every day—" she repeated like an echo, biting her lips till the blood ran—not to burst out in a scream of despair—not to cast herself at his feet with the prayer that he might not go, but stay there, or take her away, far away, instantly!

"I love you," he said for good-night at parting, with a kiss on her hands and her mouth.

But she did not return them, nor move at all. Propped against the wall, she stood looking on blankly while he put his things on—opened the glazed door—vanished beyond it. Her strength had all gone; sobs choked her, and her heart was bursting.

"Miecio!" she called softly after him.

He did not turn back, for he had not heard her.

"All is over," Mela said to herself; her tears broke her will down and surged forth in torrents, sweeping away all that remained of her self-control.

CHAPTER IX



BORNE on the wings of happiness, Vysocki hastened to his home. They were still taking tea, and Mrs. Travinska was there as well. She had dropped in for a minute; her husband having gone out with Kurovski, it was tedious staying in the house. They were all sitting round a table lit by a big lamp, and busy giving their impressions about Nina's guests of the afternoon.

On entering, Vysocki happened to hear Anne speaking strongly in favour of Mela, against whom Mrs. Vysocka had made some unpleasant remarks. The latter, provoked by her son's presence, had raised her voice to pour forth all her racial animosity against the Jews.

Vysocki listened in silence, took tea, and thought of Mela. He was still fresh from her kisses, still felt them burning on his cheeks; his lips were parched with them, and the memories of her embraces thrilled him still. He was so rapturously happy that his mother's unjust fanatical words only made him smile with pity, looking significantly at Boroviecki, who, with elbows on table, and blowing a cloud of tobacco-smoke, was casting glances at Nina and Anne, sitting near one another, with their heads almost touching.

In the lamplight Nina's hair sparkled like gold, and her clear diaphanous complexion resembled a vase of rosy porcelain lit up from within. Her greenish eyes, stippled with russet specks, were fixed on Mrs. Vysocka's face. Anne, under her crown of dark fluffy hair, betrayed her feelings of impatience; her expression changed at every instant, as she

took up and confuted Mrs. Vysocka's allegations, at times throwing her head forward, and knitting her thick black brows, which looked like the two halves of one bent bow. Mirror-like, her mobile countenance reflected every impression that flashed through her mind, but it was with the arguments of the heart that she defended the Jewish race, and set herself against Mrs. Vysocka's logic. The latter, ensconced in an arm-chair on the farther side of the table, asserted herself in trenchant tones, now and then, when urging some specially strong point, leaning forwards into the circle of lamplight, and bringing into view her still beautiful face.

"Doctor," Anne said, "pray help me to defend the Jews, and Miss Grünspan in particular; for Charles refuses, and says she needs no defence at all."

"Well, but I too must say the very same. We might as well defend the sun for giving us too much light, too much heat."

A space of lively talk ensued, which was interrupted by the entrance of Joe Yaskulski, who was in tears, and stammered out that Max had sent for Vysocki, and he had been looking for him everywhere.

"Off at once.—Good-night to you all."

"For me, too, it's time to go," said Nina.

"It's so fine out of doors that I may see you home," Anne said. "Will you come with us, Charles?"

Charles assented, though not very much pleased with the proposal. He wanted to go to bed.

"By the by," the doctor called out from his study, where he was putting on his dust-coat, "as to Miss Grünspan, I would ask you all to have a little consideration for her. She is to be my wife!"

His mother started violently to her feet; but the doctor was already hurrying away to Baum's house.

When Max left the Travinskis to rush home at Joe's call, his mother had for some time lost consciousness. The large room was filled with the rays of sunset; a reddish glow

flooded the room, and cast a lurid light over the face of the dying woman, whose eyes stared up at the empty expanse of sky. A great Candlemas taper, clutched nervously in her hand, threw a dim yellow flicker over her tranquil features, bedewed with the sweat of her death-agony.

Frau Augusta was kneeling at the head of the bed, and saying prayers in a low plaintive voice. Her husband sat at the foot of the bed, with a cold, stony face, and stared at his wife out of eyes red with unshed tears. Not one muscle quivered, not one tear flowed from beneath his inflamed eyelids. There he sat, calm to all outward appearance, but holding to the arms of his chair with hands so firmly clenched that his nails left their mark on the hard wood. When he saw Max come in, he raised his eyes and looked, as he rushed to the bed and fell upon his knees.

"O Mother! my mother!" he cried in terror, touching the hand in which the taper of the dying was grasped.

She drew a slow, long, very long breath, and her large, glazing eyes reflected the sunset like deep waters; her right hand wandered unconsciously about the counterpane, seeking the stocking that had rolled to the wall, together with the worsted and the knitting-needles stuck into it.

In the silence of the room, the cook and all the servants were kneeling and weeping aloud.

"My mother!" Max cried once more, his grief racking his heart. He burst out crying.

She seemed to come to herself, let the taper drop from her hand, and seized his hand in her own, which was growing cold. A smile as of great joy passed over her dying lips, and she moved them. But no word came, only a stertorous breathing—the awful sound of the death-rattle. Her smile had frozen on her lips. She turned her face to the window and remained thus, looking out into the gathering twilight, and towards the last sunset clouds, which floated in the grey sky like strips of copper, and faded slowly.

The wind, blowing through the garden, bent some dwarf lilac-trees towards her window, at which their clusters of blossoms would tap, peeping in with violet eyes at the fixed

immovable visage of the dying woman, whose lower jaw was beginning to droop and fall. Though Max knew it was the end, he immediately sent for Vysocki, waiting for his arrival impatiently, and listening apprehensively to know if she still lived.

She did. But her life was now no more than a series of reflex movements. At times she would utter a low moan, or open her mouth, or aimlessly move her stiffening fingers; but she would for long intervals remain immobile, with vacant eyes gazing into the night of death, and the night now reigning over the earth.

Vysocki, shortly followed by Boroviecki, arrived at length, only to find that she had breathed her last a little before.

Max hid his face in the bed-clothes and cried like a child. Old Mr. Baum rose with difficulty, bent over his dead wife, felt her cold brows and hands, gazed for the last time into her open eyes, as if he were gazing in wonderment into the depths of Eternity—closed those eyes with trembling hands, and walked out very slowly, stopping almost at every step. It was only in his dark, empty office that he came to rest, on a pile of kerchiefs, and brooded there for a long time, without thought or movement.

When he started up from his trance, the night was far spent; the stars twinkled in space like luminous dewdrops, and the town was sleeping very quietly; only, from some house on the outskirts, there came now and then the sounds of a concertina. He rose and walked with slow steps through the whole apartment, plunged in obscurity and stillness.

Joe was in the gas-lit warehouse, sleeping on a pile of goods. Baum went on without awaking him, passing through one empty room after another, all quiet with the silence of the death that had come to the house. In the dining-room Max lay asleep on the sofa, just as he had come from the Travinskis—in a dress-coat and a white tie.

After a moment's hesitation outside his wife's room, he went in. The bed had been moved to the middle of the chamber. There she lay, all covered over with a sheet, through which the outlines of her face were just visible. Sev-

eral wax-candles burned on the table; several workwomen prayed and chanted the Office of the Dead. Frau Augusta, her face all swollen with tears, but with her two cats on her lap, was dozing on the sofa there. The draught at the open window blew the blinds out, and made the curtains wave.

Baum contemplated the scene as if he wanted to engrave it in his memory for ever, or could not take in its meaning. Then he passed round to his own room, took a lighted lamp, and went to the factory, as had been very much his wont latterly, when unable to sleep.

There stood the pavilions—a vast, silent quadrangle of stone. The moon had set; only the stars shed their dusky light, mingled with the nebulous glimmer of approaching dawn, and, as it were, enfeebled by the conflict between the night and the day, already begun in the far-off east. The yard was like a dark well, and resounded with howling and whining. They had forgotten to unchain the dogs.

But he heard nothing, as he threaded the dark tunnels of the corridors, strong-smelling with reasty air. His footsteps echoed dully in the solitude and silence, and he paced through the chambers with the measured tread of an automaton.

They were all very lonely, lonely as the grave; the two rows of looms that stretched along on either side were as skeletons that drooped inertly. There hung, like fibres and sinews torn from them, the belts and straps fallen from their pulleys, and covered with long, floating cobwebs; the pattern ribbons dangled limply down, like the hides of flayed beasts.

“Dead!” he muttered, surveying the suite of chambers and listening to the dreary silence. “Dead!” he ejaculated from time to time. But who can tell whether he was saying this of his wife, or of the factory?

Wearily he crept on from chamber to chamber, from floor to floor, from pavilion to pavilion, and his steps grew slower and feebler as he walked.

Vysocki and Boroviecki, both of them, left Baum’s in a very melancholy mood.

"Sorry for Max. His mother's death—he loved her to distraction—will put him out of gear for a good long time—and just when he is all but indispensable for getting our machinery in working order. Rotten luck! But it's my luck," Charles said, grumbling.

"Is Miss Anne to come to Lodz soon?"

"In a week."

"And your wedding?"

"Just thinking about it. First of all, the machinery has to be got ready and set in motion. When our factory starts working—which cannot be before October—we shall see."

They went on in silence, but on getting to Piotrovska Street most unexpectedly came across Welt.

"Ah! When did you arrive, Moritz? We are just going to take coffee somewhere."

"I've just come back and was on my way home; but if you are taking coffee, I'm with you."

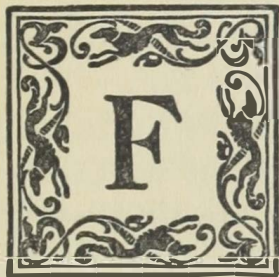
"Max's mother has just died; we come from his house."

"Died? I don't like that sort of thing." He gave a shudder. "Anything new in town?"

"Nothing to mention. Or if there is, I haven't heard of it. Too busy all day long at the factory. Grosplik will be glad to see you; he was asking after you to-day."

"He won't be so very glad," Moritz remarked, putting up his glasses with rather shaky hands, and eyeing Boroviecki sharply.

CHAPTER X



FOR two days we have been here, and yet I cannot believe that we are really in Lodz," Anne observed, as she sat on the veranda.

"We really are, all the same," old Mr. Boroviecki replied, from his little cart in the garden. He shaded his eyes from the sun, and looked round at the red brick factory walls, and on the close-packed chimneys, with a loving look at the scaffoldings round his son's factory, which were visible at the end of the garden, and he sighed gently.

"Yes, we are indeed in Lodz," she assented, and returned to the house, all littered with open packing-cases, furniture in disorder, utensils wrapped and swathed in straw, and a chaos of articles hastily unpacked and arranged by some of the workmen, with Matthew to direct them.

She helped to make order, hung up the curtains by herself, and occasionally had a lively talk with Matthew; but sat for the most part on a chest or a window-sill, looking round the lodgings with mournful eyes.

She felt much distressed; this strange house, with rooms all freshly restored, and floors smelling of the paint quite recently applied, saddened her to such an extent that she spent very much of her time on the large veranda that went nearly half-way round the house, and had festoons of wild vine about it. But even this brought her little relief, used as she was to the vast green country-side, to the bluish forests up the very verge of the sky-line, and to the glad sight of the great azure vault above, which nothing hindered her from seeing. And now her eyes encountered buildings and factories and roofs glistening in the sun—and the whole, in short, of that Lodz which enclosed her round about with

a circle of stone: the Lodz she had dreamed of, that was to satisfy every one of her desires, but that now inspired her with profound, yet indefinite and groundless misgivings and terrors.

She went back into the house, ashamed of her own weakness, and scarce able to account for the tears of vague yearning that were now springing up in her eyes.

"Do you need anything, Father?" she would ask him now and again, putting her head out of the window.

"Nothing, Anne, nothing. Why, here we are in Lodz, and Charles is coming to dine with us in an hour!" he would answer her in a full, even boisterous voice, not wishing her to guess that he too was inwardly weeping.

And he would draw a deep breath and cough explosively. It was, of course, the air, so full of the pungent odour of slaked lime mixed with boiling asphalt, which was to make the flooring of the chambers in Charles's factory. He put his handkerchief up to his mouth and looked down the long garden walk that led to the factory, and was bordered with magnificent bushes of "Centifolium" roses, all in full red and white blossoms.

It was very fine weather, serene and warm; the garden cherry-trees waved slightly, their blackened leaves shining glossily under their coating of coal-dust and soot. Thirty or forty fruit-trees raised their heads, whose verdure was paling already, and looked—enviously as it were—towards the sun and the open country hard by.

Old Mr. Adam roused himself at last, and whistled to the blackbird he had brought from the country. But it did not answer his well-known call; brooding half-asleep, with drooping wings on the sand of its cage, it lifted up its head, looked drearily at its master, and fell once more into a drowse.

"Is Charles not coming?" Anne called from within.

"Not yet. The hooters will sound for dinner in half an hour. Come here, Anne, my dear!"

She came, seating herself upon the arm of his wheel-chair, and turned her face to him.

"What is the matter with you, Anne? What is it? Tell

me frankly, but don't give way; don't blubber. Ah, see what a brave girl she is! Ha ha! you'll soon forget that Kurov ever existed at all.—Come, come! lift up your head and march on!" he said quickly. He stroked her hair, kissed her, and set to whistling very noisily, beating time with his foot.

After a time he told Matthew to wheel him into the house, where he began to make a racket, ordering the workmen about, and singing tunes he took care that Anne should hear.

And then he had a bit of a quarrel with Kama, who had come with Mrs. Vysocka to call on them and help to put the place in order; but she only made confusion worse confounded by leashing together the old hounds brought over from Kurov, that were wandering about the premises with hanging heads, and making them run about the veranda with her.

"Miss Anne! Here's Mr. Charles and that black-avised Mr. Moritz come to dinner!" she cried out from the veranda, and went out to meet them, having a great liking for Charles. The hounds followed her, and—Kurov-fashion—commenced barking at the new-comers. "I shan't bid you welcome, for I haven't seen you this fortnight, Mr. Charles; nor you, Mr. Moritz, for a thousand years!"

"But," said Moritz, as a set-off, "I have brought you something nice from Berlin. I haven't it by me, but shall bring it to you at home."

"Oh, we in Spacerova Street all know about your promises! Stephanie does not believe in Charles's either; always saying he'll come, and not coming, for the last two weeks," Kama cried, showing them into the veranda, where dinner was served.

On that day Moritz was singularly pale, nervous, and fidgety. He did his best, notwithstanding, to be talkative and entertaining, and bantered Kama so that she lost patience and flung the contents of a glass of water into his face; for which she was so severely rebuked by Mrs. Vysocka that she begged his pardon in tears.

Dinner was soon over, coffee soon drunk, and the men

went back to the factory, when on every side the sirens were hooting their afternoon call to work. When they had left, and Mr. Adam had been wheeled out into the garden for a nap, Mrs. Vysocka, taking Anne aside, said to her with great satisfaction: "I must tell you I am not uneasy about my son any longer. He was from home—in Warsaw—for a couple of days, but came back yesterday, and told me at dinner that I need not trouble any more; that he would not marry that—that Grünspan girl—because she had refused him! You hear that, Anne? That Grünspan girl has refused a Vysocki, has refused my son! What inconceivable impudence! A milk-trader's daughter not caring to marry my son! I am glad she would not; I shall have a thanksgiving mass said; but all the same, I cannot forgive her that. My son refused! And by whom? by a common Jewish woman!—He showed me her letter. She tells him shamelessly that she loves, but cannot marry him, because her family would never hear of her changing her religion. So she bids him farewell—and really with so much feeling that, if I had not known she was a Jewess, and he she wrote to, my son, I should have wept over her fate. Here it is, Anne; read it if you like, but not a word of this to anyone."

Anne was a long time reading it, covering as it did four pages of closely written script, and so fraught with tears, with love, with sorrow, with self-denial, that before the end she was crying over it.

"Why, she is dying of grief!—If the doctor loves her, he will let nothing come between them!"

"God will reward her for what she is suffering. Fear nothing; she'll not die of love, but marry some millionaire, and console herself pretty soon."

"No matter in whose heart, suffering is always suffering," Anne returned mournfully.

Suddenly she started to her feet. The sound of a fearful crash had come to her ears. It was from the factory; and then an uproar, and the yells and shrieks of many people.

An instant later Kama came running along the path from

the factory. "O Lord Jesus!" she screamed. "All killed! O Lord! O Lord!" She was beside herself, and shook with terror and dismay.

Full of dread, Anne ran to the place, but at the wicket-gate between the garden and the factory courtyard a man had been posted, who would not let her pass, explaining that there had been no catastrophe, only some upper scaffoldings had fallen and contused several workmen; and that Mr. Boroviecki had just arrived on the spot, and ordered him not to let anyone pass.

Anne returned. But after Mrs. Vysocka's and Kama's departure, further waiting became unbearable to her. She thought she could hear the groans of the poor sufferers, and sent Matthew out to get particulars of the accident; but, unable to wait till he returned, she took her little medicine-chest with her, and made for the factory.

There she found the work going on as usual, which astonished her exceedingly. Bricklayers stood whistling on the scaffoldings of the main structure; tin-workers were unrolling great sheets of zinc upon the roofs; the yard was filled with carts and bricks and lime; and the machines were still being set up in the future spinning department.

She nowhere saw Charles, who had gone to town, as they explained, and they showed her the chamber where Max Baum was at work. He hastened out to her, with a blue blouse, a grimy face, hair matted with perspiration, pipe in mouth, and hands in pockets.

She asked what had happened.

"Oh, nothing. A bit of scaffolding has fallen; but as it was, we were going to take it down."

"Have there been no casualties?"

"Charles is all right; he went out with Moritz but now," was Max's curt answer.

"I know. But have none of the workmen been hurt?—I heard a scream——"

"Yes, I suppose somebody must have been knocked about. I heard someone cry out too."

"Where are they?" she demanded rather peremptorily,

piqued by the offhand manner of his replies, and the somewhat defiant look on his face.

"In the passage beyond the third chamber.—But what have you to do with such a scene?"

"Is the doctor there?"

"They sent for him; not at home. Meantime Yaskulski is attending them. He knows about medicine; used to bleed cattle at his farm.—No. I don't let you go in; it will only upset you, and it's no sight for your eyes. Besides, you can't help them," he added firmly, barring the way.

She felt offended, and eyed him with such an air of outraged dignity that he mechanically stood aside to let her pass, and pointed out the way to her. He went back to his interrupted work, but from time to time peeped furtively into the room where the injured men lay.

It was a wide corridor, divided from the yard by a glazed partition, and was now used as a temporary ambulance. Five workmen lay there on heaps of fresh shavings and straw. A workman was helping Yaskulski to administer first aid. The passage was filled with groans; and from the bodies of the men, lying there like logs, there oozed streams of blood on to the white floor, where—in the stifling heat from the adjoining rooms and from the glazed partition with the sun beating fiercely upon it—the blood clotted and dried at once.

Anne uttered a cry when she saw all those bleeding shapes, but without more ado set to help Yaskulski dress the men's wounds. She shuddered to behold those broken limbs, already beginning to inflame and swell; she was frightened at those livid faces, begrimed with earth and blood; their groans brought tears to her eyes, and several times she was so near fainting that she had to go out into the fresh air. But she always returned. She mastered the horror, the sickening nausea, and with infinite compassion and pity she washed and stuped their wounds, and arrested the bleeding with pads of lint as well as she could. She took everything in hand (Yaskulski being more able to lament than to work) and sent Matthew out for the first doctor he could come across. The news that the young lady herself was dressing the poor

men's wounds had spread at once through the factory, and every minute someone came to look through the partition and ran back to confirm the report.

In about half an hour Vysocki, who had the office of surgeon in the factory then building, arrived. He saw with wonderment her glowing tear-stained face, her dress and hands all soiled with blood; and the half-dead victims, who tried with benumbed hands to seize and kiss the hem of her garment. He set to work with a will, and presently ascertained that two of them had their legs broken, and one a crushed shoulder and shoulder-blade; that the fourth had a fractured skull, and the fifth—a lad of fifteen, who was all the time insensible—had received some internal injuries.

Three of them, who were more dangerously injured, were conveyed to a hospital on stretchers; the fourth was claimed by his wife, and taken home amid clamorous lamentations. There remained only the lad, whom the doctor had at length restored to consciousness, and ordered to be put on a stretcher. But he shrieked out with fear, and caught Anne by her dress.*

"O madam, don't send me to the hospital, pray don't! For God's sake don't make me go there!" he shrieked.

She tried to explain and pacify him, but it was of no use. He quaked in agony, glancing with terror at the men who stood by with the stretcher.

"Well, but then tell us where your mother is; they'll take you there, and I'll not forget you."

"Mother? I have none."

"Then at whose house are you living?"

"I don't live here."

"You must live somewhere."

"I sleep in a brick factory, and always come with the bricklayers in the morning."

"What shall we do with him?"

"He must go to the hospital," the doctor decided; but the

* A word of explanation here. Throughout Poland the common people are most strongly prejudiced against hospitals, where they believe patients are inhumanly treated.—*Translator's Note.*

decision so terrified the boy that he again clutched at Anne's dress—and became insensible.

"Mr. Yaskulski, let them take the boy to my lodgings. The spare room upstairs," Anne commanded.

"Fear nothing, you will be cared for in our own home," she told him when he came to.

He did not answer, but as they were carrying him away, he gave her a long look of wonder and veneration. When the boy was upstairs, Vysocki found out that three of his ribs had been broken, and set them.

The rest of the day passed as usual.

In the evening, during supper, at which Moritz was also present, Anne went up to see the lad, who was feverish and slightly delirious; so she remained with him a little longer, and came back so greatly agitated that her hands shook as she poured out the tea. She was just about to tell Charles about the boy, when he said in a low voice, but with a strong stress on the words:

"A queer fancy that of yours, to bring injured people into the house!"

"He fears the hospital, has no home, sleeps amongst the brick-kilns; what was I to do?"

"Not at any rate to turn our house into a hospital for vagrants."

"But—but it was in your factory he was hurt—and so——"

"He doesn't work gratis," Charles cut in angrily.

She looked at him in amazement. "Are you serious? Was I, then, to turn him into the street, or send him to the hospital and give him his death of fright? Why, the very news that he was to go there made him swoon!"

"You like to apply the glamour of sentiment to everyday life. It's all very pretty, but to no purpose."

"That depends on the degree of feeling one has for human sufferings."

"Kindly believe that I too have feelings. But you cannot force me to feel tenderly for every incapable, every lame dog, every faded flower, every crushed butterfly!"

There was in his eyes a gleam of keen malicious irony.

"The lad has three broken ribs, a broken head, and a hæmorrhage of the lungs. So he is not to be classed among faded flowers or crushed butterflies. He is in pain——"

"Then let him die off, and God take him!" he retorted sharply, stung by the high tone she was taking.

"You are without mercy," she murmured reproachfully.

"I am not; but neither do I deal in philanthropy. A pity you have not harboured the lot of them in our house!"

"It was needless; but had there been any need, I certainly should not have hesitated."

"Sorry there was none: we should have had a fine sight—our home turned into a hospital, and you into a Sister of Mercy!"

"And a still finer one besides; for you would surely have thrust them all out into the street!" she answered resentfully, and thenceforward did not speak. Only her nostrils quivered, her eyes blazed, and she bit her trembling lips to conceal her excitement.

But it was not so much indignation against him that she felt, as sorrow at his unexpected cruelty. It was difficult for her to think his heart so hard, so foreign to any feeling of humanity. That it was which pained her, and she eyed him as much with incredulity as with dread. Charles, however, avoiding her eyes, talked on with his father and with Moritz, until he rose to take leave.

As he bent over her hand to kiss it on parting, she whispered: "Are you angry with me?"

"Good-night, Anne.—Come along, Moritz.—Has Matthew gone yet?"

"As soon as it was evening, I sent him round to your lodgings." It was his father who answered; Anne, incensed at Charles's behaviour, had gone out on the veranda.

"Yes! fight and conquer out of doors—all to be tripped up at home by snivelling sentimentalism!" Charles broke out when in the street.

Moritz walked on in stolid silence.

"That's a woman's logic; she'll be in hysterics over a

dying crow to-day, and victimize all her family the next—just for the whim of the moment!” he added, after a pause, still much exasperated.

Again Moritz made no reply.

“Women love to procure the happiness of humanity to the detriment of their most binding duties.”

“What a woman may be,” Moritz observed, “I don’t care. I only want her pretty, if a sweetheart; and rich, if a wife.”

“That’s tomfoolery!”

“Oho! I see by your ill temper you are out of cash.”

Charles smiled a dreary smile, and did not contradict him.

Their lodgings were lighted, and Matthew had the samovar bubbling. Since Anne had arrived, Charles had left the house to live in his former apartments, though inconvenient on account of the distance.

Matthew reported that Mr. Horn had called early in the evening, and left a note for Director Boroviecki, which was on his desk. It contained the news that Grosman, Grünspan’s son-in-law, had been arrested on strong suspicion of arson. Horn had sent the tidings, because he knew Moritz to have dealings with Grosman.

“I say, Moritz, here is news that concerns you,” Charles said, coming into his room.

“It’s of no consequence,” Moritz observed, after perusing the note. “He’ll not sleep a wink the less for such trouble as that. Who’s to prove anything?”

“But what are the rights of the matter?”

“I happen to know that the man is innocent—white as percale just bleached.”

“And just calendered,” was Boroviecki’s amendment, as he stepped back into his room.

The apartments were very quiet. Charles wrote and made calculations in his own room; Moritz was similarly occupied in his. Max, who since his mother’s death never went out in the evenings, now came straight home after supper at his father’s, and would read in bed from the Bible, or have his cousin in, who was a student of divinity, and with whom he

had theological discussions and wrangled for hours on the most abstruse matters imaginable.

"Oh, doggoned!" Charles ejaculated, throwing his pen down and striding about his room. For some days since, he had had continual money troubles, and been continually disappointed by his furnishers, who—as if of set purpose—failed to keep their engagements with him; while the workmen, too, had damaged the machinery and exposed him to great loss.

To crown all, a spring of water had welled up in such abundance, while they were digging the foundations of a warehouse, that the work had to be interrupted. That day's incident with Anne, besides, and his quarrel with her, had completely unstrung him, all the more so because he felt himself to be in the wrong, and to have an ever-increasing grudge against her. She was in his way!

"Moritz!" he called out from his room. "Sell the rest of our cotton; I can't manage otherwise, and am not going to borrow from usurers."

"You have big payments to make."

"What the deuce? haven't I shown you my accounts to-day?"

"Yes, I saw them, but thought you had money to pay with."

"I have hardly anything at all, and everybody is disappointing me into the bargain. Can there be a conspiracy against me? If not, what does it mean? Wherever I try to get credit, I am denied. There's something underneath all this. Who can want to ruin us? It's an affair of competition anyhow; I begin to see that. What! I have sunk forty thousand roubles in it, and cannot get the factory started? And am not able to get as much more? And this in Lodz, where a fraudulent bankrupt like Shmerling is now building an enormous factory, without a groschen to bless himself with; where every scurvy fellow makes big business, and all on credit—I am forced to borrow from private sources?"

"Take a partner with ready money or with plenty of credit. You'd soon find one."

"Thanks for your advice; but I have begun single-handed, and single-handed I'll stand or fall. To take a moneyed partner is to go into service; and to be dependent on another man means to go on toiling as before—in order to set up one more factory of shoddy goods. A factory I want to have; I want cash too: but I don't want to manufacture worthless stuffs."

"You are out in your reckoning. Shoddy gives the biggest profits."

"And yours is the reckoning of a petty dealer, like Zuker and Grünspan, and most manufacturers who are of your people. They want to gain cent per cent, and at once, but don't remember the adage: 'Once bit, twice shy.' Next time your customer tries someone else, and you have to wait out in the cold till you catch another fool."

"Of fools there are always plenty."

"In business you are short of them sooner than you think for. You see, as people grow wealthier, they also grow more exacting. A peasant in the country buys his wife one of Zuker's kerchiefs; that same peasant, if he settles in town here, must needs buy one from Grünspan; and his children—were they only working-people—would get their kerchiefs at Meyer's. Purchasers generally are beginning to recognize that any article is cheap, not because its price is low, but because it is good. And Bucholc and Meyer and Kessler know that very well, and only do business in stuffs of good quality."

"So they do; it's a fact. But Shaya, Grünspan, and a hundred others make their millions much faster, and there's room for two hundred more—and plenty of time to get rich in."

A pause ensued, both of them thinking.

"How much do you need?"

"I must have ten thousand by Saturday."

"Aha! You are forgetting Müller. Why, he offered you a loan of his own accord."

"No, I am not forgetting him. One word of mine would, I

know, throw his iron safe wide open to me. But I cannot say that word. Unfortunately, I cannot."

"If the factory's existence, if all my future—were at stake, I should not waver a minute," said Moritz significantly. "Yes, I should give up everything else to say that word."

"I cannot. Even if I wished, I cannot——"

"But if you were forced to——"

"Up to now I am not forced. Say no more!" And he shook himself.

"Charles, you have superstitions, and they are no good in business. You think of a great many things worth doing, but are still afraid to do them. And that may cost you dear. Superstitions are a rich man's luxuries."

"Do you imagine that a 'superstition,' as you call it, is a piece of clothing we can change at will? No, it is something deep in our blood. That's why it is so hard to fight down, why I am not yet quite sure these 'superstitions' are no good, why I sometimes think—but no matter for that."

"That's bad. With such nonsensical ideas a man may be the best of colourists, but hardly even a middling Lodz manufacturer. But you are undecided, perhaps, and would like to return to Knoll. He would certainly take you back." Moritz nervously stroked his beard as he uttered the gibe.

"Let be. One does not go back to one's childhood."

"No. But one may never get out of it."

Charles looked him steadily in the eyes without replying.

"I can get the money for you."

"What? Lend it to me?"

"No, but increase my share in the concern. It would not be worth my while to lend the money, and you also would find it more convenient. There would be no fixed date for payment; and then, according to the amount of my share, I could take an active part in the business; for why should you overwork yourself as you are doing?" He said this quietly and in a rather careless tone, examining his fingernails the while.

"What do you say to bills of exchange, drawn at six months' date?"

"I tell you, I don't care to loan my money. I prefer to have it rolling, the turnover is so much greater.—Do you accept?"

"All right. We'll talk particulars over to-morrow. Good-night."

"Good-night," Moritz said, still contemplating his fingernails, not to betray the delight this stroke of business had given him. And when Charles had left him, he locked his door, pulled down the blind, and opened a small safe let into the wall, out of which he took a large oil-paper envelope, full of accounts and notes, and along with them a big bundle of paper roubles.

He counted the money and put it back.

"A big operation!—And if it fails?" He made a grimace of disgust at the thought and glanced towards the door. There was in his mind's ear the sound of many feet and the clatter of weapons outside.

He smiled at his forebodings and set to study the balance-sheet of Boroviecki's factory with the most careful scrutiny. He had before him all the assets and liabilities of the concern in those notes and accounts, which he had got a man working in the building bureau to copy for him.

But Charles, on his side, though apparently willing to increase Moritz's share in the society, was quite determined to manage somehow to do no such thing, and even find means to eliminate him entirely. He knew Moritz too well to trust the man entirely.

Another thing besides. Such extraordinary disinterestedness on the part of one to whom the only god was the Almighty Rouble, that was a fact that required looking into with special caution.

Of Max, with whose uprightness he was perfectly acquainted, he had no suspicion. He knew that Max required for his happiness nothing further than plenty of work and and some show of independence. Max wanted to work as a master; but to him it was a matter of indifference whether

his ten thousand roubles gave him cent per cent, or whether he got only his salary as head of the spinning and weaving department.

But Moritz! he was to be feared. Who would be the first to overreach the other in the struggle now beginning? This demanded the greatest wariness.

Moritz had spoken of Müller, an unpleasant subject for Charles. Anne was now dwelling in Lodz, and her relation to him was known. He was compelled to marry her. He remembered that well, and not too seldom, as he thought that the works now building were built in part with her money.

Yet at the bottom of his heart there lurked an expectation that somehow the wedding never would come off. And so he did not quite break with Mada, nor neglect to make occasional neighbourly calls on her, during which he paid the young lady many a pretty compliment that to her meant a good deal. He was playing a double game, and knew he was; but as yet he had no idea how it would end, or where it would lead him to. At the moment, what he wanted was to have the factory started.

The "superstitions" Moritz had spoken of, the mental conflicts he seemed to be waging within himself, were merely remnants of his former attitude of mind, survivals—the scattered stones of a morality which had long lain in ruins, phrases which summarized them and had instinctively stayed on in his memory, nothing more. These superstitions (or what they meant, at least) not only did not direct his will and decisions, but had no influence over them at all. It was not on account of these that he was prevented from openly declaring what he meant to do, and from openly doing what he secretly recognized as a necessity; it was only a sense of shame, of respect for his father, and a vague feeling of social propriety that forbade one to do evil crudely and with brutality.

He had been too well-bred to commit any scoundrelly deed, and moreover was physically incapable of many an act which Moritz could do with perfect calm and serenity. To set fire to his own factory, highly insured; to betray a trust, to ex-

exploit his workmen, was beyond him. He held all these things as low and vulgarly criminal, and looked on such deeds with the loathing of a cultured man. There were so many other ways of making money! Evil, unless unavoidable besides being lucrative, held no attraction for him; virtue appealed to him by its beauty; and if it gave more profit besides, he found it adorable.

He thought over all this, and smiled—a somewhat cynical smile; but his introspection was not without bitterness and pain. “And the end of it all—is death!” he meditated—and set to read his letters.

The only one he read through was from Lucy: a request for him to meet her the next day without fail. He put the others aside till the morning, and went into Max’s room; he had scarcely spoken with him since his mother’s death.

“Well, what about your father? I have not had time to see him as yet. Has Travinski met the bills?”

“He has, but that will not help.”

“Why not?”

“Father is no good any more. Of our five hundred looms, only twenty are working. In three months—in six at the latest—the factory will be no more; and so will he.”

“What, has there been any fresh trouble?”

“No, only the end is coming on quickly. His sons-in-law are devouring him. They have come with a legal claim to Mother’s estate.”

“Quite natural that they should.”

“It’s all the same to the old man. He told them to sell all our grounds, and only leave him his factory. He will sit all day long in the office with Joe, or visit the burial-ground, and at night he walks about the factory. Signs of melancholia coming on, these are!—Ah—though that’s a trifle—I wanted to warn you. Have an eye on Moritz!”

“Why should I?” Charles asked, eagerly. “Do you know anything?”

“Not yet. But I see in his face that he’s hatching some bit of rascality.—And then, too many ‘playta’-makers call upon him!”

CHAPTER XI



"HAT are you ruminating about?" Charles asked Moritz point-blank at breakfast.

"About matters of business—big matters," he answered, raising his eyes from the glass of tea he was holding in both hands without drinking, so deeply absorbed he

was.

"Of money, you mean."

"Quite a pot of money. I am going to make two operations, which, if successful, will set me on my legs. But as to your money, you can have it in the evening.—Am I to get rid of your cotton?"

"Not yet; I have hit on an idea."

"Why did Max glower at me so, and go away without a word, as if I were some evil beast?"

"I can't say. Last night he told me your face revealed you were planning some dirty trick; that you were in some plot."

"What an ass! How can any dirty tricks appear on my face? I look a respectable man, just as usual, don't I, Charles?"

He scrutinized his face in the looking-glass, and his harsh features, trained to assume sudden changes, took on a good-natured expression.

"You needn't wonder; Max is terribly cut up about his father's affairs."

"I gave him good advice—to have the old man adjudged incompetent, and himself appointed administrator of the factory and estate. He wouldn't, though his sisters and their husbands agreed, for they knew it was only by that means that anything at all could be saved."

"Max says it's his father's estate, which the old man has a right to squander if he chooses."

"No, he's too clever a fellow to think so really; there must be something underneath all that."

"Perhaps not; for, take it as you like, it's no pleasant thing to have to declare one's own father insane."

"I don't say it would be pleasant. A father—yes indeed, that's hard. But then the factory, the business, are also things worth making sacrifices for. What would you do if the case were yours?"

"I should not have to consider it at all; my father is almost destitute."

Moritz laughed. The talk flagged. Then he stormed at Matthew, changed his clothes a great many times, and tried on a large number of ties.

"You are dressing up as if you meant to propose to somebody."

"There may, amongst other things, be a proposal; there may," he answered, with a sickly smile.

Ready at last, he sallied out with Charles, but was so absent-minded that he had to go back twice for something forgotten. His hand shook a good deal, too, when he settled his glasses, and, the day growing hotter, he grew more and more nervous. He was shaky all over, and his hand could not grasp his stick properly, which more than once dropped to the ground.

"You look frightened at something."

"No, but I am unhinged," he said. "I must have been overworking myself."

They went together to a flower-shop, where Charles bought a big bouquet of roses and carnations, and ordered them to be sent at once to Anne. The flowers were an offering to atone for his rude conduct of the day before.

Moritz went to his office in Piotrovska Street, but could do nothing there; he looked into the cotton storehouses, wrote an order for Rubinroth, and smoked a few cigarettes, but all the while revolving in his mind Grosplik and the business about which he meant to call on him. Now and then

he would shiver and shake like a man with an ague, and then mechanically touch the oil-paper envelope with the money inside, which was in his pocket; the touch would set him right. For a moment a jaunty, courageous look would overspread his face; and energy and a resolve to act directly welled up in him once more.

At one of such moments he walked on bravely as far as to Grosplik's, but just outside his office he drew back, paced Piotrovskia Street for a while; and then, in pursuance of an idea that had occurred to him, purchased a bouquet of the finest and most expensive flowers to be got, had them tied with a ribbon of great price, wrote Mela Grünspan's address on his card, and sent off both card and bouquet.

He jotted down the price in his note-book: "Unforeseen expenses—personal," but crossed off "personal," and wrote "For the firm" instead. And then, though it was rather early in the day, he went round to dine at the Colony.

"I must think the matter over," he said in self-excuse.

In the dining-room they had cleared away the fancy-work that lay scattered about the table, and laid it for dinner. From the next room came the clatter of sewing-machines and the noise of talk.

The diners were coming in, one by one. Malinovski came first, and sat down quietly by the wall; he was looking so weary and mournful that Mrs. Stephanie went and sat down by him.

"What is the matter with you?"

"I am unwell—unwell!"

He passed his hand across his brow, sighed, and looked at her so sorrowfully out of his sea-green eyes that she could find no word to say, and left him.

Nor did he speak at all when everybody had come and taken his place, until Horn came and sat next to him. Then he whispered: "I know where she lives."

"Who?"

"Sophy. In Stoki: Kessler's palace."

"Still interested in her?"

"No, but I wanted to ascertain where she was." And he closed his mouth.

"Do you know," said Horn, addressing the company, "that Grosman, Grünspan's son-in-law, has been arrested?"

"Of course we know. That bird will have a rest now, and the fire he lit will cool his heels."

"Is Grosman that pretty Mela Grünspan's brother-in-law?" Mrs. Stephanie inquired.

"Yes; he lately had the misfortune to be burnt down. Poor man! the insurance money might have consoled him; and now they take him by the collar and haul him off to jail!"

"It's all a mistake," Moritz asserted. "Grosman will be set free this very day!"

"Mr. Horn, do come and sit down with us," Kama exclaimed, making room for him; and when he had done so, she added: "I must ask you about one thing."

"I am all attention."

"Have you a mistress?" she said quite loud.

One moment, all were dumbfounded; the next, a roar of laughter.

"What on earth are you saying, little girl?" her aunt cried, turning very red.

"Have I said anything wrong? Why, in every French novel all the young men have sweethearts!" she returned, quite unabashed.

"You parrot, you! Repeating words you don't even know the sense of!"

"Good gracious, Aunt! Why are you storming at me so? I've no notion."

With a shrug of her shoulders, she walked out into the parlour, and when Horn followed her there, "I am a parrot," she snapped at him, "but I won't say a word to you."

"But it's your aunt, not I, who calls you so. I want to know why Kama didn't welcome me when I came in; and why Kama tyrannizes over me, and is so full of caprices."

"She's not full of caprices; she tyrannizes over no one."

But you—you may go to your music-hall singers—those dreadful girls! I know all about you—all!”

“And what does Kama know?” he asked, with a serious air, to hide his amusement.

“Everything, everything!—That you are a bad man, a wicked man, a dreadful man, a rake. Mr. Fishbin told me why you never came here last Sunday. You were in Arcadia. Yes, you were there, drinking, and singing, and kissing those—those minxes! I hate you, I loathe you!”

“And I love you all the more for it, Kama!”

He tried to take her hand, but she snatched it away, and put the width of the table between them.

“Yes, yes! when you were miserable, you came to us to be comforted, and have compresses put on your head, and be cried over!”

“But when was I so miserable?” Horn asked.

“When? Why, before you got your situation at Shaya’s.”

“I was not miserable then—or ever. Indeed, it was then I enjoyed myself most, for I had more free time.”

“What? were you not miserable?” she ejaculated, with a quick step forwards.

“Never!”

“And are you not so now?” she inquired excitedly, in a tearful, reproachful voice.

“Not even in my dreams.—Why, Kama, what has come over you?”

“And you were not miserable? And I have prayed for you! I denied myself a hat, for I was ashamed to wear finery; and I was always crying and thinking of you; I was so miserable I could not sleep; and you—you were not miserable at all! O Lord! O Lord! how wretched I am!” she cried out in a broken, thrilling, deeply resentful tone of voice; and big tears came trickling, rolling down her cheeks.

“My dear Kama! Dear child! Kama, my wonderful little darling!” he exclaimed in raptures, greatly affected and kissing her hands.

But she drew them back, covered her face with them, and

cried out between fits of sobbing: "I do not love you any more! If you had been miserable, I would have gone through anything—even death—for your sake.—But—but—you are a hateful man, a wicked man. You are not miserable—you have deceived me!" And she wept spasmodically.

Horn was at a loss what to do. He tried to explain matters; Kama would not hear him. And then, greatly touched as he was, he had a very great mind to laugh outright; she was such a great baby! So he went and sat beside her, quietly.

She started away from him, caught up her little dog from the sofa, and held it as a shield, saying: "Bite him, bite him, Picolo! He's a bad man. Has deceived Kama, and Kama loves him no more."

He went to the door, smiling; the factory sirens had begun intoning their afternoon chant.

"So you will not so much as take leave of me? Nor even beg pardon?" she called out, hurriedly wiping her tears away. "Very good, then. From this day forth, we do not know one another; from this day forth, I walk out with whomsoever I may choose. Yes, yes, I will. Don't think I care for your company. Not in the least."

"Nor do I care for yours; I have far more fun in Arcadia than with Kama."

"That's all one to me. Kiss those girls; you may."

"Farewell to Kama, and farewell for ever!" he cried in tragic tones, and made his exit.

She looked at him fiercely, and with stony indifference heard the door close on him. But on hearing the sound of his feet on the stairs, a sharp pang shot through her at the thought he really might have gone away for ever.

Looking out of the window, she saw him cross to the other side of the street and disappear presently down a lane; and then she dropped on to the sofa, clasped Picolo to her bosom, and exclaimed: "O Picolo, dear, darling Picolo, how very wretched I do feel!"

But her mood of weeping had passed away; so she looked into the glass, smoothed her dishevelled hair, and sedately went over to her aunt, took her by the hand, and with a

mysterious air led her to the parlour; where she fell upon her neck, and cried mournfully: "All is over. Never, oh, never shall we see Horn again!—Aunt, I am so unhappy!" But, observing that her aunt was the reverse of interested, she drew away from her, and asked in a tone of sorrowful reproach: "What! do you not shed even one tear?"

"Of all the nonsensical girls—" Mrs. Stephanie was beginning, when Moritz called from the antechamber, putting his head into the parlour: "Kama, I'm off; won't you kiss me good-bye?"

"No, but Picolo will!" and she went for him, the dog in her arms; but Moritz would not wait, and was gone.

Once more out in the street, he again felt his resolution to see Grosplik fail him, and he tried to think of some other more pressing business to be settled elsewhere—of a matter he was to see Kessler about—and then of going home as an alternative.

Finally, however, he got over his qualms and entered the banker's office.

"Is the Director within?" he asked of Vilchek.

"Yes, he is, and has been sending for you these last days."

"Your affair with Grünspan, is it settled yet?"

"Only just begun; we have got as far as fifteen thousand roubles."

Moritz was astonished. "Won't that do?" he asked.

"Not half enough."

"Are you not—I speak as your well-wisher—are you not pushing matters too far?"

"You yourself advised me to stand firm."

"I advised you? I advised you? Possibly I did, but there's a limit to everything," Moritz answered, not a little vexed; for when he had counselled Vilchek to squeeze Grünspan, he had no decided intentions concerning Mela, and now he was sorry to have given the counsel.

"By the by, come round to Boroviecki's office to sign the agreement about the coal-supply."

"Thank you very, very much," Vilchek said with a joyful handshake.

"But I must have a word with you first."

"As to what I must pay for your services? Tell me frankly."

"We shall arrange all that later. I have in mind bigger dealings with you. I expect to go in half an hour; you will come out along with me, and we shall have a talk."

Moritz slowly took off his overcoat, rubbed his hands, and glanced out at the street, overshadowed with a dark rain-cloud; the rain was falling outside and pattering on the window-panes.

"What is to be is to be—and all will come right," he said to himself as he entered the private office.

The banker started up at his entrance. "How are you, my dear fellow, how are you?" Grosplik cried as he embraced him. "Too bad of you to leave all your friends so uneasy about you, and for so long!—We were all in such fears on your account! Even Boroviecki wanted very much to get news of you."

Moritz smiled quietly to find him so interested.

"What about the wool?" Grosplik inquired. "Yet it was of you I was thinking chiefly."

"Many thanks; you are an extremely kind man."

"Who can say I am not? Yesterday I gave twenty-five roubles to the fresh-air fund. See, here it is in black and white." And he pushed a newspaper over to him. "Well, what about our wool?" he asked again, with some impatience.

"You know how the prices of building plots and of bricks have risen, don't you?"

"I do; we deal in building plots to some extent. Yes, a lively season is commencing in Lodz.—You have heard," he went on to ask in a lower tone, "what they are saying in town about Grosman?"

"Police doings?"

Grosplik smiled. "Tut, tut!" he said, looking round, and opening the office door to see that no eavesdropper was listening. "Yesterday they were within an ace of arresting him."

"And I heard yesterday evening, on arriving, that he had been arrested—quite."

"Oh, Lodz is a town of gossips. People must at once make everything that goes on their own business. What does it matter to anybody what other people do? Information was lodged against Grosman by someone, but nobody can possibly harm him. Why, he's as unspotted as I am myself."

Moritz smiled again, an enigmatical smile.

"Why on earth," Grosplik continued, "should the police meddle with people's private affairs?"

"Have you much at stake in the matter?"

"A cool thirty thousand! They might have been of use to him. But then, accidents do occur to factories as to goods as well—and to people. The insurance rate is high, and it's so hard to pay up good money for nothing. And when a man is unlucky—even fire won't burn for him by itself!"

"Grosman will come to no harm; he's an honest man."

"So I say. And I'd even stand his sponsor. But what's to be done? There are so many rascals about, ready to swear they saw him—I don't know what they wouldn't say.—What about my wool?"

"I bought it, and sold it cash down directly."

"That's splendid, for I am short of cash just now."

"Who, alas! is not short of money?" was Moritz's melancholy reply.

"You at least, for you've a good head on your shoulders.—Have you the money by you?"

"I have not," Moritz answered with deliberate coolness, though feeling his heart beat fast.

"Send it round to me by four o'clock without fail; there are the bills of exchange to be met.—Have we made a good haul?" he asked, offering Moritz a cigar.

"I have—pretty good. As to *you*——"

"Why," he interrupted hastily, "we were associates, and the capital is mine."

"Mine rather, since I am in possession of it," Moritz retorted, lighting his cigar.

Either the banker had not caught his meaning, or would not catch it, or did not believe his own ears; for he lit his

cigar from Moritz's match, saying: "We agreed on ten per cent after deducting expenses."

"That ten per cent I shall pay you annually, but I am not returning the capital," Moritz answered coldly.

"What—what are you talking about? Have you a screw loose anywhere?" he shouted.

"I'll be frank with you. I have invested the money."

"My money!"

"Your money. I have borrowed it from you at a remote date of reimbursement."

The banker sprang to his feet, and stood stupefied, doubting the evidence of his senses. "Mr. Moritz Welt, pay my thirty thousand roubles back to me this very instant!"

"Mr. Grosplik, I shall not. Needing them to carry out a big business operation, I have appropriated them. You shall have ten per cent for them yearly, and the capital itself at my own convenience." He was by now quite composed and at his ease.

"Are you mad?—No, but knocked up, wearied with your journey and with business worries; you must rest awhile.—Antony! fetch a glass of water.—Antony! fetch a syphon of soda-water.—Antony! fetch a bottle of champagne!" he called out in great excitement to the servant in attendance on the threshold, and ordering each time a different beverage. "Yes," he went on, "this hot weather reacts upon the head; I know! I myself pretty nearly got a stroke the other day. My dear Moritz, indeed you are exceedingly pale; haven't you a pain about the heart? Perhaps we had better call in a doctor."

Moritz eyed the man with an amused smile; he was so comically terrified!

"Calm yourself a little.—Now, now!—I have some eau-de-Cologne here to bathe your forehead with."

And, moistening a handkerchief, he was about to dab Moritz's temples with it, when the latter cried: "Oh, let me be. I am quite well, quite in my right mind."

"I am delighted to hear it. Dear, dear, how you frightened me! So much that I was a bit shaken too.—A good joke, ha

ha!—To play me such a trick! And I was taken in and thought you really meant it. Ah, that's a good one, that is!—Come, hand the money over now; our cashiers are expecting it.—A good joke, a first-class joke!”

“I have not got it. I have, as I told you, appropriated it.”

“What's that, what? It's an outrage—it's robbery—robbery in open day!” he shouted, making as if to rush upon Moritz.

The latter only clutched his stick very hard, and eyed Grosplik steadily.

“Mr. Blumenfeld! Connect our telephone with the police station,” the banker cried, opening the door to the bureau. “Oh! I shall take another tone with you now—you—you thief! You shall be chained—fettered—rot in prison—freeze in Siberia!”

“You'll just be quiet, or I'll have you up for defamation of character. And you're not going to frighten me with the police. What proof have you that the money you gave me in the cheque on Leipzig was not my own? Aha! what do you say to that?”

The banker, suddenly quieted, sat down and stared at Moritz for a good while with an inexpressible feeling of impotent wrath, so intense that it brought the tears to his eyes.

“You may go, Antony, we do not require you. He shall be cared for more properly in jail.”

“Kindly refrain from throwing silly idle words about; I am beginning to have a little too much of them. Let's talk as between man and man.”

“And I trusted you so! I looked on you as my own son!—As my own son? As my son and daughter both together! You! you, to have played me such a villainous trick—yes, a trick for which may the Lord God requite you! For who would do so mean a thing to his friend who trusted him to the tune of thirty thousand?”

“Don't bother about that.—I have borrowed thirty thousand roubles of you, date of payment unstated, for the purpose of making a big operation. I'll write you an acknowl-

edgment, and also pay back the capital at some future time. Meanwhile the money is in activity."

"And I know where," muttered the banker, completely crushed. "In Berlin—in cabarets—I know——"

"Now I want to have a friendly talk with you," Moritz said impatiently.

"You are a thief, and no friend of mine!" he shouted, once more giving way to his wrath. "Give me my money back!" He reached for a revolver lying in a half-open drawer of his desk, but slammed the drawer instead, put the key in his pocket, strode about the room, cursed volubly, called names, and even advanced on Moritz with clenched fists.

The other sat motionless, stick in hand, with a sardonic smile on his face, until the banker had quieted down a little. Then he set to expound to him what his plans were.

"I am thirty," he said; "high time to set about doing something. I have good ideas, but no money to carry them out with. What was I to do? As an agent, I might manage to live somehow, but never amass capital; I live so much on credit that if I were now to go into liquidation, I should be worth a few thousand roubles less than nothing. Now I shall be able to get on; and as you have furnished me with the money, I feel it my duty to tell you what I wanted it for.—Boroviecki is quite down on his luck, with no more ready money at all; he'll have to borrow of usurers. I shall let him have the money now, find an opportunity of taking his place as dominant partner—and arrange matters so well that he will be no more than manager in his own factory. My plan's a good one. He has forty thousand roubles sunk in the factory; there are means of getting them out of him—and in a year, or two at the utmost, he'll be stone-broke. I have gone well into the matter, and warrant you it must succeed." All this Moritz said quietly, confirming his assertions both with rows of figures, and with particulars of the various special dodges and trickeries, misrepresentations and frauds, with which it was his intention to put an end to Boroviecki. He spoke for a long time, unreservedly and exhaustively.

The banker listened and grew quite calm; stroked his whiskers, sniffed as if he had scented carrion that would make a good meal for him too; and his eyes sparkled, and he smiled with delight at the dastardly plot. He even forgot that his own money would be spent in carrying it out, and heartily consented to the whole scheme. Now and then he would drop a word or two to suggest some secondary project, which Moritz accepted on the spot with supplementary additions, weaving it into his plot as he went on constructing it, always with more and more of confidence and secrecy.

Grosglik drank some water, opened the window, and called out to the people who were taking away the trucks of wool from the warehouse: "Wait there in the yard!"

"It's raining; the wool might get wet."

"Wait, I say, you lout!"

He slammed the window, shot a glance at the dark sky, and proceeded to write something down very quickly.

Moritz gazed for a while at the line of carts over which the rain was beginning to pour, then said carelessly: "The wool is not likely to weigh much more; I see the bales are of new canvas."

"Too clever by half, you are!" was Grosglik's reply; and he ordered tarpaulin to be spread upon the bales. Presently he went on to say, offering Moritz a cigar with much courtesy: "I knew your father very well. A sharp-witted fellow, only he—made an unwise bankruptcy." And he added significantly:

"Whom evil fortune follows fast
Gets handcuffs and a chain at last."

"But how do you like my plan?"

"And, do you know, your mother was my cousin."

"Yes; she sold remnants in Piotrovska Street, and did something in the pawnbroking line."

"You are like her; she was a splendid woman—opulent charms, you know.—I'll tell you what. You've a good head, and I like you. And as I like intelligent young men, and enjoy helping them, I'll help you. I find your plan good."

"Yes, I knew you for a brainy man."

"We shall be associates in this affair."

"Will you assist me financially?"

"I will."

"And with ample credit?"

"That I shall get for you."

"Good. In token of partnership, let us embrace."

"Excellent! Better embrace a hundred times than lose thirty thousand roubles once!"

They then discussed the particulars of their partnership at some length, and elaborated the plan of action together.

"That's one business settled; I am now going round to arrange another: to propose marriage."

"How much?"

"Mela Grünspan!"

"Wait a bit till they are clear of the Grosman affair."

"No; they'll be readier to agree now, since I may be of use to them."

"Why, I like you very much, Moritz; so much that if my Mary were grown up, I'd give her to you with a hundred thousand roubles!"

"Too little."

"Well, say a hundred and twenty, and wait a year for her."

"Can't. Two hundred thousand, or it's not worth while my waiting."

"Well, that's no matter. Come and dine with me on Sunday. We shall have company—Warsaw people. And then I'll let you into a little project that may mean a million."

Again they embraced, and still more affectionately. But this did not prevent the banker from making Moritz sign an acknowledgment for the thirty thousand roubles received.

"I like you so much! Fairly, I am enraptured with you," Grosplik said, with a beaming face, putting the paper away in his safe.

Moritz took Vilchek out with him, but at the door there

stood a ruffianly-looking man, who barred Vilchek's way.

"Excuse me; I'll come over to you to-morrow; I must say a few words to this fellow-citizen," he said to Welt, and nodding farewell to him, and beckoning to the man, he went with him towards the railway station.

CHAPTER XII



NLY be determined, and you can have what you choose," Moritz thought as he walked along.

He had been determined—and now the thirty thousand roubles were safe in his pocket. He was determined to finish off Boroviecki; he relished the thought of getting the man's money, and his good work into the bargain. Yes, he was going to make a good meal of him!

He was also determined to marry Mela, and marry her he most certainly would. To him, at that moment, impossibility was out of the question.

Flushed with his first great victory, he was filled with pride and confidence in himself. "I need only to be brave, and to have will-power," he thought, looking up at the sun, with a proud smile. It was coming out above the town, and shining radiantly down upon the side-walks and the roofs, which glistened in the rain.

"I must buy myself a present to celebrate the day," he said, looking at a jeweller's shop-front. He went in. A ring, adorned with a large brilliant, had caught his fancy, but its price repelled him, and he left the shop without making any purchases. He entered a haberdasher's instead, where he got some gloves and a tie.

"They'll have to buy me a betrothal ring, in any case," he said, as he walked on to make his next stroke of business, and get engaged to Mela without loss of time.

From a matchmaker, secretly engaged by him to give all news about the Grünspan family, he had learned that, Mela having broken with Vysocki, Bernard Endelman had proposed to her by letter, and been rejected; and that this was

supposed to be the reason why he had turned Protestant, and was expected to marry some "French monkey." He was also informed that the sons and heirs in several good firms were all willing, but that she was not.

"Why shouldn't she take me?"

He glanced mechanically into a shop-front mirror, and smiled at his own image, which smiled back. A handsome fellow he was—very! He stroked his raven-black beard, settled his glasses firmly, and walked along, calculating his chances.

Of ready money he had a little; of credit at Grosplik's a good deal; of scrupulosity not the least shadow. And so he saw the most splendid future opening before him.

Mela was a very good match, and he had long felt a great liking for the girl. True, she had that infatuation for things Polish; she loved noble deeds and generosity, and conversations about the higher life. But all that would cost him little, while the effect in the drawing-room would be excellent. And he himself, in his student days, at Riga, had he not many a time advocated similar ideas, and made speeches on matters of æsthetics, and thundered against the conventions of the day? Nay, he had even for a year embraced socialism; yet that had by no means prevented him from doing good—very good—business.

Here he remembered with a smile old Grosplik's recently horrified face.

"Moritz! just wait a bit!"

He swung round.

"I have been over all the town in search of you," said Kessler, as they shook hands.

"On business?"

"Oh no! Just to ask you to an evening party at home. There will be some company."

"A little private revelling, eh? Like last year?"

"No. A friendly tea, and conversation, and a few surprises."

"Are the 'surprises' natives of Lodz?"

"Imported, most of them; but there will be home-bred ones for those who prefer.—Are you coming?"

"All right.—Have you asked Kurovski?"

"Of Polish brutes I have enough in my factory already! I'll have none in my house, at any rate. His lordly airs set my back up. He'd have you think he's doing you a favour to shake hands with you! Damn the fellow!" he muttered, and went on to say: "I saw Grosman just now—released on bail."

"Ah, that's news for me; I was on my way to Grünspan's."

"I'll give you a lift there; only I must first step into the factory for a while."

"Do any 'surprises' belong to your factory?"

"Just so. I want to make a choice from the spinning-room."

"What? Will they be at your beck and call?"

"They're trained to be. If they're not, there's a short way with them: turn 'em out."

Moritz laughed, and went off in Kessler's carriage, which presently stopped in front of his and Endelman's factory.

"So wait a little, please."

"I think I'll go in with you. My opinion may be of use."

Passing through the great courtyard, they came to several low buildings, containing the room for washing the raw wool, the sorting-chamber, the carding-room, and the spinning-room. There were only men at the washing-troughs, with water splashing all about; but in the carding-room there were heard women's voices, immediately hushed at Kessler's entrance. The working-women, mute, with eyes glued to the machinery by which they stood, were like so many automata, surrounded with masses of wool that like a dirty foam came frothing up out of the machinery, incessantly purring and growling from the many bands and pulleys.

Kessler went foremost, head bent forward between his shoulders, stooping like a hunchback and stepping slowly, with jaws working under the fell of red hair that covered them. His peaked head and long, pointed ears gave him much the look of a bat out in search of prey. His beady eyes intently sought out the youngest and most handsome of the factory girls, who either blushed scarlet under his piercing

glances, or else never raised their eyes from their machines.

He would now and again stop beside one of them, ask about their work, examine the wool, and inquire of Moritz in German: "What do you say to this one?"

And his answer would be either: "Leavings for the workmen!" or: "She has a lovely shape; a pity she's freckled."

"Since she is so pretty, she is sure to have a beautiful skin." And: "Milner!" he would shout to the foreman of the carding-room. When he came up, Kessler would ask for the girl's name, and write it down in his note-book.

They went twice round the room in different directions, but were unable to light upon anything else more suitable, most of the girls being plain, haggard, and worn out by work.

"Come away to the spinning-room! We shall find nothing better here. Only leavings."

An extraordinary stillness prevailed in the spinning-room, all white and, as it were, snowed over with wool and bathed in the brightness that fell from the skylight overhead. All the machines were working at the very top of their speed, but—so to say—with the most concentrated, breathless, noiseless activity. Only now and then was heard a short sharp creak from the revolving wheels, silenced at once with a flow of oil, and dying away in many-sounding vibrations, like the low muttering of a thunder-storm round about the machinery at work.

"That dark girl close to the yarn reeled off the spindles: will she do?" Kessler whispered, pointing to the other end of the room, where the spun yarn was being wound upon reels, and where a powerful brunette with a magnificently developed form was standing; it could be plainly seen underneath her thin dress and the wide sleeves of her unbuttoned chemise, for in the dreadful heat all the working-girls were forced to be as much uncovered as possible.

"She's perfection!—Don't you know her yet?"

"She has only been here for a month.—Hausner, our chemist, was after her, but I frankly advised him to let her alone."

"Let's go round there," said Moritz, with eyes aflame.

"Mind lest one of the machines should catch hold of you in a friendly embrace!"

They went forward cautiously along the narrow central passage. On either side, the machines were working away, winding the yarn upon huge spindles and twisting it into double threads. Jets of spray were continually at work: a tremulous spirit, in hue like rainbow flashes, gushed up and fell over the machinery, the workers, the heaps of snow-white yarn, and the thousands of spindles revolving with a murmuring sound, and in the sun's glare resembling numberless white whorls, turning frantically within bright rose-coloured aureoles.

Kessler took note of a couple more girls, and then they both went out, followed by glances of hatred.

As they went, they passed outside the main motor tower. On the threshold of that tower, inside which the enormous driving-wheel was everlastingly raging, stood old Malinovski, pipe in mouth, hands in pockets, who did not take his cap off to Kessler, nor so much as bend his head, but stood there defiantly, eyeing him with a sombre, ravenous glare.

Meeting his eyes, Kessler was somewhat startled, and seemed about to shrink back; but he suppressed his fear and went of set purpose into the tower, where the two pistons, working to and fro like hands, were turning the monstrous driving-wheel, which hissed wildly in its mad, whirling, interminable flight.

"Anything new?" he inquired of Malinovski, whilst looking at the sparks and flashes in the air, surrounding with a brilliant aureole the driving-wheel as it went round.

"I have a little matter of business with you, sir," said the old man quietly, coming up to him.

"All petitions must be made in the bureau; no time now!" he replied nervously, and went out in a hurry, for Malinovski's tone and manner did not please him at all.

"That man's grimy face is not a pleasant one!" Moritz remarked.

"Not at all," said Kessler. "He is showing his teeth; I'll have to knock them out for him."

In the bureau he gave a note, with the names of the chosen ones, to a confidential clerk, who knew what further proceedings would have to be taken; then he drove Moritz over to Grünspan's.

"A carriage will be waiting for you at about six, in front of your office," he said at parting, and vanished in the cloud of dust that rose from under the carriage-wheels.

Moritz, as he entered Grünspan's house, expressed his opinion of Kessler. "A thorough blackguard!" said he.

CHAPTER XIII



It happened upon a family council. Grünspan senior was walking about, bawling, thumping the table. Regina, who sat by the window, was now bawling like her father, now shedding tears of rage. Old Landau sat at the table with a big silk cap on the back of his head. He had rolled back the oilcloth table-cover, and was making calculations with a bit of chalk. Grosman, pale, worn, and jaded, lay on the sofa in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and now and then threw an ironical glance at his wife.

"He's a robber, the biggest robber in all Lodz!" the old man was shrieking. "I am ruined through him—he is killing me!"

"When were you released?" Moritz asked of Grosman.

"An hour ago."

"Quite comfortable in there?" he jeered.

"You'll see for yourself when you go in there too. As you will. Only you'll be locked up for your own misdeeds; not, like me, for those of my wife and my father-in-law!"

"Albert! don't be a fool; you must not speak so. Moritz is of the family; Moritz knows how matters stand. As you put it, he might think that those things are true they say of us in Lodz." Old Grünspan spoke in anger, coming to a standstill in front of Moritz.

"What I know of the affair is another matter. I have come to you to-day as to relatives, and as to respectable people," Moritz answered pointedly.

Grünspan gazed at him in nervous excitement, and the two looked into each other's eyes for some time, each trying to

take the other's measure. Grünsplan was first to avert his eyes and resume his invectives.

"See, I come to him as a man and a dealer. I say to him: 'Sell me your plot of land.' And that herdsman—that—oh! may he get what I wish him with all my heart!—laughs at me, and shows me about his dumping-ground, tells me it is a land of gold, an earthly paradise, which he won't sell for less than forty thousand roubles!—Oh, may some disease come upon that mug of yours which uttered the words!" And he called out to the next room: "Mela, child, give me my drops! I feel very unwell to-day and I shall get worse."

"What is all this row about, and against whom?" Moritz asked; he had not grasped clearly what it all meant.

"Against Vilchek. A shrewd lad. Wants forty thousand roubles for four acres of building-land."

"Are they worth the money?"

"They're worth fifty thousand now."

"Yes; building-plots have risen by thirty per cent."

"Just so. And no one can tell where this rise will stop; and the old man must buy it, to enlarge his factory."

"Then why does he hang back so, and raise Beelzebub over it all? In a few months he may have to pay double for it."

"You see, Father is a petty shopkeeper still; can't forget his little doings once in the Old Town, and his haggings over a few kopeks," Grosman observed, with a sneer.

"Good-morning, Mela!" Moritz said, starting to his feet and going to her.

"Good-morning to you, Moritz. Thank you so much for the flowers. I was delighted with them."

"Had the florist had any more beautiful, they would have been yours."

That day she was looking very wan. There was a dash of sadness in her smile and in those eyes of hers, now sombre, and larger seemingly than before, because a little sunken and surrounded with discoloured rings. Her movements, too, were unusually limp, and she dragged her limbs about like a person exhausted by suffering. She gave her father a lump of sugar, soaked with medicinal drops, looked frigidly at

her sister, and of set purpose ignoring Grosman's outstretched hand, passed on to the next room.

Through the open door Moritz saw her face bending over her grandmother, in her arm-chair at her unchanging place by the window. His eyes followed all her leisurely gestures, and the noble contours of her body; and somehow he felt his heart beating more quickly, undergoing some emotion of the better sort. So he paid but little attention either to the old man's invectives, or to the whining reproaches of Regina, complaining that Grosman had defended himself feebly in presence of the investigating official, and was about to ruin them by his stupidity.

"Bah! children, enough of this. All will come right. Some loss there will be, but the whole business will have brought us in seventy per cent. I shall apply to Grosplik at once, who will settle with the informers by means of a go-between. We are not to be mixed up with it in any way."

"And he'll have to take the matter up in a straightforward way, unless he wants to have only five, instead of thirty thousand roubles."

"Yes; for even if things go well with us, he will not get more than fifteen—or twenty thousand at most," Grosman put in, with a sardonic smile at his father-in-law.

"You have spoken wisely, Albert. We shall give him twenty thousand, not less.—But enough of that now; let's talk over our building project. You, Albert, are not to return where you were. I have formed a big plan. We'll purchase Vilchek's plot, and with my factory as a nucleus, start a great joint-stock company: the firm Grünspan, Grosman and Company! My lawyer will go into the legal side of the business, and my builders are to hand me all particulars of the plan in a week's time. I have long been thinking this over, and I see the time has come. A score of poor devils have gone to pot, and now they're gone, there's more room for us. We shall have a calendering department of our own. Why, too, should we buy cotton already spun? We shall have a spinning department, and that will bring us twenty-five per cent of net gain. So we'll have a factory complete

from start to finish, and with every improvement. And then we shall compete with Meyer! I was thinking of that, even before you had your misfortune; and now it has come, it will be helpful." Then he went into the details of his new joint-stock company.

Regina, in ecstasies, flung her arms about her father's neck. Moritz was likewise dazzled with the idea, and almost thought of getting his own name put third on the list of partners.

"But—not a word of all this. We must first settle Albert's affair. Moritz, you—being of the family—will of course hold your tongue."

"I should long," he replied earnestly, "to be united with you by still closer ties."

Grünspan looked at him with close calculation; so did Regina; but Grosman smiled sceptically.

"Why not? It's a feasible piece of business," the old man answered somewhat frigidly.

"It was for that I came here."

"You may talk the matter over with Mela."

"Yes, but I want first to speak with you."

"Directly, directly."

He bade Regina farewell, pressed Grosman's hand, saw them out, and came back.

"Landau may be present, of course."

He seated himself, crossed his legs, and played with his long, gold watch-chain.

Moritz tried to concentrate, chewing the knob of his cane, and readjusting nervously his glasses. He meditated how to approach the old man about his daughter's dowry. At last he said candidly: "How much is Mela to have?"

"How much have you?"

"To-morrow I shall be able to show you my assets and liabilities, and the contract I made with Grosplik this very day; it's a contract of partnership. I have no reason to deceive you. My business is solid. It does not consist in payments to be made by insurance companies who call them in question, and are to some extent backed by legal authorities."

He took care to stress the last words. "So pray answer my question."

"But how much have you got? Tell me the amount, and we shall verify all to-morrow."

"Thirty thousand roubles in ready cash.—To say that I have credit for twice that amount would be cold modesty on my part.—My education, my connexions with all the millionaires in Lodz, and my honesty (not once have I been a bankrupt!) are all important assets."

"As to bankruptcy," Landau remarked, "it would hardly have been worth your while."

"Counting roughly then, I am worth about two hundred thousand at least, roughly speaking, for a modest man does not care to boast. So what do you give Mela?"

"She has been for quite ten years educated at a most expensive school; and she has travelled abroad and learned many languages under the best teachers, specially qualified. She has cost me very much indeed."

"Well, but that's her own personal and inalienable property; it will never bring me even one per cent."

"What! not one per cent? And what about her breeding? In the drawing-room she is like a queen. She plays the piano too, and ah! what beautiful manners she has! She's perfection, she's my dearest—a diamond of the first water!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"How much do you give for the setting?" Moritz demanded bluntly.

"Landau and Company had decided to accept fifty thousand," was the evasive answer.

"Won't do. Miss Mela is indeed a diamond, and most beautiful; as spiritual as an angel, and indeed angelic in every way. But—fifty thousand?—Won't do."

"Won't do?—It's a good round sum, fifty thousand. You ought to kiss my hand in gratitude for so much. What, is she ugly or lame or blind, that I should pay you more to take her?"

"Her health is weak, she is often ailing; but of that I say not a word."

"What are you talking about? Mela's health weak? Are you out of your senses? Mela is health itself; you will see. She'll have a baby every year. Show me another girl in Lodz as healthy as she! Do you know, an Italian prince lately wanted to marry her!"

"It's a pity she didn't take him; you would have paid his bootmaker and his tailor as well."

"And you, my man; what's your firm? Moritz Welt's Commission Agency, how does it stand? What's the name good for?"

"You forget my partnership with Boroviecki."

"You are in it to the tune of ten thousand roubles. My word, what a big capitalist you are!" He laughed at him.

"To-day I am in for twenty thousand; in a year the factory will be all mine, I promise you."

"Oh, then we'll see next year," Grünspan said, outwardly indifferent, but secretly pleased to get Moritz's offer; he foresaw he would be a hard-fisted hand at the grindstone.

"Then it will be, not I, but someone else. This day Grosplik has offered me one hundred thousand with the hand of his daughter Mary."

"Grosplik might offer twice as much and find no bidder."

"And yet she has not a brother-in-law and a father suspected of arson."

"Speak lower," said the old man, with a glance towards the next room.

"If you think it's pleasant or a credit to be son-in-law of the firm Grünspan and Lansberger, you are woefully mistaken."

"Lodz knows well how much my name stands for," he replied with great self-assurance.

"Where is it known? By whom? At the police station and by the men there," he hissed brutally.

"How dare you repeat such foul gossip?" the old man retorted, stung to the quick.

A long pause followed. Grünspan paced the room, or looked out of the window; Landau sat still, stooping over the table; and Moritz, by this time somewhat ruffled, im-

patiently awaited the end of the bargaining. He had already made up his mind to make fifty thousand do, but still wanted to try if he could not squeeze a little more out of the old man.

"Is Mela willing to have you?"

"That I shall presently ascertain, but want to know how much you give me with her."

"I have told you; my word is no mere breath of wind."

"In that case, it's out of the question. I must have more for my business. To sell myself for fifty thousand roubles would never pay. My education—my connexions—my honesty—and the firm I belong to are worth considerably more than that. Reflect, Mr. Grünspan: I am neither Landau, nor Fishbin, nor any of those office clerks. I am the firm Moritz Welt. You will be investing your daughter at a hundred per cent. If I need money, it's not for dissipation.—Now, will you give me fifty thousand on the nail, and as much more in two years' time?" he asked trenchantly.

"In principle, I agree; only we must deduct my expenses: the wedding, the trousseau, and the costs of her education."

Welt was exasperated. "Mr. Grünspan," he cried, "what meanness, what abominable meanness, to inflict such grievous wrong upon your own daughter!"

"Well—well—we shall consider the matter, when Albert's trouble has blown over."

"On account of this very trouble, which dishonours her too, you ought to give your daughter ten per cent more. We both have to take your part before the public.—Then, have you said your last word?"

"I have; my very last."

"A word may be of little value; I want a bond of surety."

"If Mela only says she will have you, everything may easily be arranged."

"Very good. I go to her this instant."

"I do wish she may agree; for you're a man I like, Moritz!"

"Grünspan, though you're a sly old dog, I have the highest esteem for you."

"We shall get on very well together."

On that they shook hands.

Mela was in a tiny boudoir, where Moritz found her, lying on an ottoman, book in hand, but not reading, and looking out of the window.

"Excuse me if I don't rise; I am rather unwell.—Sit down.—Why, what a solemn air you have put on!"

"I have been just now speaking to your father about you."

"A—ah!" she drawled, but scrutinized his expression.

"I was just speaking—and began to——"

"I see—the flowers—the conversation with Father—I understand.—Well?"

"He told me all depended on you, Mela, and on you alone," he repeated so gently and with so much feeling that she turned her eyes to him once more.

He then set to telling her about himself, and how he was very fond of her, and had been so for ever so long.

With her hand propping her head, and a sad, tired expression in her face, she remained turned towards him. A strangely painful sadness, a sadness as of tears that flow constantly because no comfort is possible, a sadness as after the death of one's very dearest, was gnawing at her heart. From his very first words she had known he had come to propose to her. There was in her eyes neither resentment nor indignation; she but looked and listened, first with indifference, and then—as he began to speak at greater and greater length, and in greater and greater detail—with a sort of uneasy sense of grievance in her breast.

"Why is it he that comes to speak to me of marriage? Why is it not Vysocki, my best beloved?"

She buried her face in a cushion, to hide her tears, and not to see who it was that spoke, only to hear—hear with bated breath, only partly conscious who uttered the words. *That* she wished, and with all her strength wished, not to know. Within her soul the tears were flowing fast.—With all the power of her loving heart; with all the might of her imagination and yearning and desire and love, she called upon the other to come and set her free from this torment, and take

Moritz's place—and be transformed into him!—And this her desire was so intense that it at times gave her the illusion that Vysocki himself was sitting beside her and telling her of his love.

She was thrilled and penetrated at the sound of that gentle voice—was it *his*? for it was not Moritz she heard now, but the sounds which, on that evening in Rose's room, had sunk into her brain, and were now reproduced as in a phonograph, filling her soul with glamour and delight and bliss. She listened long, mechanically repeating certain words with deep joy, filled with the longing to say: "I love you"; and a mad desire came over her to fall into his arms and embrace him. Opening her eyes, she fixed them upon him in bewilderment.

It was then Moritz who sat there, hat in hand—the handsome Moritz!

Moritz!

And it was not love he was speaking of, not of their coming happiness with one another; nor of that ecstasy the heart feels in the love it yearns for, nor of those sweet emotions which love creates!

No, he was telling her calmly how well suited they would be to each other, and talking of the factory he was about to found, of his capital, of her marriage portion, and of the various enterprises he intended to start, and how she should never want for anything, and they should have their own carriage.

Then—she reminded herself with an effort—it was Moritz—Moritz! Almost as in a dream, she asked him: "Miecio—Moritz! do you love me?"

She was quick to correct her blunder, and would have told him she did not mean to ask him that; but he replied with strong feeling: "Mela, I am unable to say that. You know I am only a merchant, and cannot express what I feel. But when I see you, Mela, it is so well with me that I can wish for nothing else; ay, and I even forget business. And you are so beautiful, and so very different from all the girls of our people, that you are continually in my thoughts. So tell me, will you be my wife?"

She gazed at him once more. And now again it was another face, other eyes, that she beheld; and she heard the fiery, passionate, yet restrained utterance which declared *his* love! She closed her eyelids on which the kisses imprinted by another were burning still. She trembled at the delightful memory, and drew herself up, straining against the back of the ottoman; another, she fancied, was taking her in his arms, and pressing her to himself.

"Mela, will you be my wife?" he asked once more, puzzled by her silence.

She was herself again now. Rising, she said, hurriedly, and without taking thought: "All right. I will marry you. Make all arrangements with Father. All right, Moritz; I will be your wife."

He wanted to kiss her hand, but she gently withdrew it.

"Now go. I feel very, very unwell.—Go—and come again to-morrow afternoon."

More she would not say; but he was so rejoiced at the success of his enterprise that he never remarked on the singularity of her behaviour towards him, but ran off to Papa Grünspan to get the amount of the wedding portion fixed as soon as might be.

The latter, however, was not within, having had to go to his office. Moritz, returning, begged Mela to tell her father all about the matter.

He found her standing just as he had left her, looking out of the window with eyes that saw nothing nor cast any glances anywhere; pale as a sheet, she was moving her lips as if communing with her own soul, or with memories of the past.

"Very well, Moritz, I'll tell Father that I am to be your wife," she murmured drearily.

When he kissed her hand, she did not withdraw it, nor did she even note his departure. But she dropped down on the ottoman, took up a book, and lay there musing, absorbed in the roses that swung about before her window, and in the gilt glass globes that hung above the garden shrubs.

To such an extent was Moritz rejoiced that, when Francis helped him on with his overcoat, he went so far as to bestow a ten-kopek bit upon him. After which he took a cab to Borowiecki's factory.

"Wish me joy," he cried, rushing into the office; "I am to marry Mela Grünspan."

"And that means a tidy sum with her," Charles said, raising his head from his papers.

"It means quite a large sum," Moritz said, correcting him.

"Yes, supposing the insurance company is willing to pay the claims made on it," Charles replied, laying stress on the word *supposing*. He felt annoyed to learn that Moritz had at one stroke captured both a lovely woman and a big dowry, whilst he, Charles, would be condemned to toil and moil all his life.

"I have brought the money."

"Oh, I have just found that perhaps I need not trouble you at all. I have found a man willing to let me have the sum on a promissory note to be met in six months' time. And only eight per cent."

All this was mere invention. No money was forthcoming, but he had a mind to tease Moritz.

"Take it. I got it on purpose for you, paying the interest in advance."

"Keep the money for a few days; if I don't take it, I'll see you lose nothing."

"I don't like doing business in this haphazard fashion," Moritz grumbled.

"So Miss Mela Grünspan has accepted you? I am just a little astonished."

"Why? What have you against me?" he returned instantly, in high dudgeon.

"Well, you look so like a common office clerk—but that's of no consequence. Only she——"

"Out with it, please!"

"Only she is said to have been in love with Vysocki," he concluded in a tone of amazement that was not without spite.

"The thing is as true as the news of Shaya's bankruptcy, should anyone spread it."

"But why should she not fall in love with him? She's beautiful, he's good-looking. Both share certain dreams about society and that sort of thing; both have very passionate natures; I could see at the Travinskis' how they feasted their eyes on each other. People there were expecting them to marry, and already talking about it." And he pitilessly enjoyed the pain so clearly visible in his friend's eyes.

"All that's possible, but is nothing to me."

"To me my intended's past would be something. I'd never marry a woman with memories of certain past facts."

He leered so wickedly as he said the words that Moritz started up in a fury.

"How dare you say such a thing?"

"I say nothing that can outrage either her or you. I merely state my opinion. And indeed I am very glad you are making so splendid a marriage." He smiled again—a very nasty smile.

Moritz went out, slamming the door, indignant and furious with Boroviecki. So exasperated was he that he took to scolding the workmen who were pumping the water out of the foundations.

"Worker harder, you knaves!" he shouted. "Are you doing your work for love or for money? Since yesterday the level is just what it was."

"What's that?" one of the workmen shouted.

"You dare to shout to me! Do you know whom you're shouting at? You rascal, I'll have you expelled this instant!"

"Get out of this before you're hurt, you scurvy fellow! Else I'll twist your mug the way you're to go!" another man growled, shaking his fist in his face.

Moritz cleared out in a hurry, but raised such a tempest that both Charles and Max, who was in the spinning-room, came out to the workmen. Moritz insisted on having the workman who insulted him turned out at once.

"Be quiet, Moritz, and don't meddle with what's not your business."

"Not my business?" he shrieked. "I have the same right here as you have!"

"Supposing you have, that gives you no right to abuse the men, quite unjustly, as it happens."

"Supposing I have? Supposing? My ten thousand roubles are worth just as much as yours."

"Don't bawl so loud; would you boast of your ten thousand roubles before the men?"

"I don't need you to teach me what I ought to say!"

"And you need not shriek so; you surely can talk quietly."

"That's as I may choose!"

"If you choose, then shriek away!" said Charles, with a shrug, going back to his office.

Max remaining, Moritz went on making a noise, and at last retired, loudly declaring that Charles was building, not a factory, but a palace; and that he, Moritz, would bring about another order of things.

"He has got hold of the Grünspan girl's dowry; that's what makes him so cocky," Charles said to Max. But he regretted having given way to anger, for he counted on the money Moritz had brought, which was absolutely necessary to him. "Always, as often as I give way to any first impulse, I act like a fool."

Now, in spite of the wound inflicted by Charles, when he alluded to the state of Mela's affections, Moritz thought and felt as before; and he regretted all the more having been carried away by an impulse, because the whole insinuation was preposterous. He would have willingly gone back to see Borowiecki, but could not venture on such a step just then. So he put it off till later, for it was already past six.

Kessler's carriage was waiting in front of his office; he went home in it, changed clothes, and ordered the driver to start off at full speed. Comfortably stretched on soft, downy cushions, he nodded listlessly to his acquaintances as he whirled by.

CHAPTER XIV



KESSLER lived a few versts out of town, near a great dye-house, his property; he was also the principal shareholder and manager of the firm Kessler and Endelman. His mansion, or rather his little castle, built in Lodzian Gothic style, stood at the top of a hill, and rose above a forest of pine-trees. In front, a large English park spread its greenery down a somewhat steeply shelving slope, to a stream running into a deep ravine overgrown with willows and alders.

To the right of the park and beyond the trees stood the red chimneys and walls; and on the left the straggling grey thatches of a village were seen in the distance on both sides of the ravine, amongst orchards and undergrowths of various descriptions.

"You live here quite in the way of a Lodzian prince," Moritz cried on his arrival, alighting from the carriage.

"I have done all I could to bring a little order and civilization into this country of barbarians," Kessler returned, ushering him into the house.

"Have I happened upon a gala day?" Moritz cried, noticing that the other wore full dress.

"The idea! No, I'm just back from an official visit, and have not had time to change yet."

"Has anybody come before me?"

"Wilhelm Müller; he has popped over from Berlin on purpose, without his father's knowledge. Then there's Baron Oscar Meyer, and Martin—d'you know him?—a merry French dog. And some others of our set, from Lodz and Berlin. Yes, and some of our 'surprises' are here as well."

"I should much like to know them. Have you anyone here to do the honours of the house?"

"You'll see."

The whole company were sitting on a wide terraced veranda, overlooking the stream; it had been fitted up as a summer reception-room. The floor was strewn with Indian mats, woven of variously coloured grasses; the furniture was of gilt bamboo, upholstered with silken fabrics. The veranda walls were of China straw matting, with threads of many-coloured beads, each of which dangled loose from the gilt frieze above and hung down to the floor in variegated billows of sparkling glass, tinkling faintly with every breath of air.

Moritz said good-evening to the guests and sat down.

"What are you taking? We are having champagne—a refreshing drink!"

"All right; champagne let it be."

A footman brought in the wine; and after him in came the gay Sophy Malinovska, who "did the honours of the house," poured the wine out for the guests, and seated herself on a rocking-chair.

A silence fell over them all, for they were eagerly gazing at her beautiful face, her bare shoulders, and the perfection of her wonderful figure. Though slightly confused at being stared at with so much curiosity, she was all the livelier for her emotion, and her ever-changing features were suffused with a faint carmine tint.

On a sudden she said to Moritz, imperiously: "I want you to rock me!"

"Would the task be unpleasant for me, do you think?" he answered, settling his glasses; she had much caught his fancy.

"Whether it would be pleasant or not to you is indifferent to me. I want to feel myself flying up and down," she said rudely, and turned towards the open side of the veranda, to look out at the park that shelved straight down to the stream below, flashing with blue and silver, and at the dark-green patches of meadow-land beyond it, and the fields that rose

farther and higher, divided into long strips of variously tinted corn.

"Let's go out," Kessler said. "I'll show you my park and my menagerie."

All were willing to go except Müller. "I am tired by my journey," he explained, "and don't care to walk just now."

"Believe me, my boy, you'll have no luck with her," Kessler said, with a shrewd glance at Sophy.

"What!—Why, I never dreamed—" Müller stammered, confused at his intentions having been guessed at. Nevertheless, he would not give it up, and when the others had gone, drew near Sophy.

"That Müller is a very callow youngster as yet," Kessler observed to Moritz, as he walked on with the rest of the company, across the magnificent greensward.

"What makes you say so?"

"Why, he has stayed with my girl on purpose to cut me out!"

"Oh, women sometimes have whimsical tastes."

"True, but they always have a steady preference for men with heaps of money."

"Not always, oh! not always," Moritz said musingly; for the remembrance of Mela and Vysocki had flashed across his mind. "Where did you get that girl?" he continued; "she's a magnificent creature."

"Aha? is she to your liking?"

"She's a fine girl, and you feel she has temperament; that——"

"Far too much of it," Kessler interrupted. "And dreadfully unreasonable into the bargain. Yes, I'm fed up with her, I am." He scowled, swishing off the tops of some sprays with his stick, and presently went on in a lower tone: "I can turn her over to you, if you care."

"A first-rate offer, but I can't take advantage of it; not rich enough."

"You mistake me entirely. She is Polish; she craves to be loved at morning, at noon, in the evening; insists on her lover's being faithful—and marrying her in the end! I tell

you, she's a damned fool. She will weep at me for days together. Always lamenting, except when she has her tantrums and I have to quiet her—after my fashion." His eyes gleamed, and his stick swished yet louder, as it lopped off the young shoots. "If you wish, I can make matters easy. I must get rid of her somehow. You see, I've decided to get married."

"I heard some talk about that in town; Miss Müller, is it not?"

"The affair is only as yet in its first stages. But one thing is sure: I'd be most grateful to anyone who'd rid me of this female.—Would you?"

"Thanks awfully, but I'm afraid not. She has a brother, a father besides, neither of them very well-bred; and I don't want to get assaulted. Moreover, I also am about to marry."

They rejoined the company, whom Kessler then took round to several large cages wherein troops of monkeys were imprisoned. He set to teasing and stirring them up with a long stick. But at the mere sight of him they ran clustering together at the farther end of the cage. Terrified at the sight of his stick, they climbed up to the top or clutched at the side-bars, with shrill screeches of helpless fury, which provoked Kessler's mirth and exasperated them still more.

There were a good many wild beasts in other cages, and almost all of them went frantic with terror at sight of their master, or showed their teeth, with snarls. A couple of bears from Tonquin, jet-black, with beautiful yellow patches on their breasts, were so maddened by the lash he plied that they dashed at him wildly against the bars, with growls that made everyone start back in fear. Everybody but Kessler. He did not budge an inch, but thrust his face forward close to their bared fangs, and struck at those tremendous wide-open jaws, roaring with laughter, and enjoying their impotent fury.

"All this snarling is for me; and very pleasant music it is," he observed, with a broad grin.

He took them farther on, to the stags that were trotting about an enclosure—with these he was on friendly terms—and to the cages where some dogs were confined, so savage that they would dash furiously at anyone who but looked at

them; between him and them there was also good-fellowship, and he entered their cages and let them lick his hands and face.

To wind up, he exhibited his flock of white peacocks, with wonderfully marked tails, faintly rainbow-tinted. He uttered a cry, and forthwith the whole flock, opening their tails like fans, went running about over the lawn, but keeping at a distance from the company, and shrieking with shrill metallic voices.

The company returned leisurely to the palace; evening was coming down over the land. The hills were as yet agleam with the pale afterglow of sunset, but thin mists rose up from the valley beneath, moving, floating, waving about, like masses of gossamer filaments, with here and there some tree-tops or the sharp angles of house roofs emerging from them.

From the stream, and the trees, and the grass-plots there came a monotonous murmur, only broken at intervals by the loud drone of beetles wheeling overhead. From the ditches and ponds the frogs were heard croaking in chorus. A wet warm breeze blew out of the hazy distance, wafting the sound of bells tolling long and mournfully, as though someone were dead or about to die; their ponderous muffled echoes rolled tremulously through the air, dying away amid the boughs of the forest and the red trunks that in serried ranks stood close to the palace.

Sophy was not on the veranda any longer; only Wilhelm Müller, rocking himself in an arm-chair.

"She's a pretty girl, isn't she?" Kessler asked him sarcastically.

"Not so pretty as—vulgar," Müller replied.

"And so you could not come to an understanding with her?" he questioned further.

"I did not so much as attempt to," he said peevishly, twirling his moustache to hide both his confusion and a red glow on his right cheek.

Kessler courteously asked them in to supper, and at the same time the menservants threw the door wide open, dis-

covering a suite of rooms furnished with extraordinary magnificence.

Supper was served in a vast circular hall, transformed into a semi-tropical garden, so filled it was with palms and exotic flowers. A round table was in the middle, laden with plate and crystal glasses to such an extent that it might have been a jeweller's shop-front, but that instead of precious stones there were roses and orchids, which decorated the napery and the table service.

Two of the chosen factory girls were sitting at a window, the other two having declined to come. They sat there in superb toilets, but in stiff, gawky attitudes, looking with apprehension at the men as they entered. There were also a few dancing-girls; these walked at their ease about the dining-hall, talking merrily and without embarrassment.

They were the "imported surprises" Kessler had told Moritz about, and Müller had brought them with him from Berlin for the evening. They were only three, but made a noise for ten, and filled the hall with all the din of a rowdy night-club. Their toilets were loud and gaudy, ornamented with paste jewellery, and they were painted besides; all three nevertheless perfectly good-looking, slender, and with figures beautifully outlined.

The supper was a slow and somewhat tedious affair. All of them were too self-conscious to be lively. The dancers, brimming over with ribald remarks and jokes, made great fun of the factory girls, who sat confused and very nervous, almost stupefied in fact; ignorant how to eat properly, what to look at, and how to behave in general.

Sophy, however, took them in hand, and subsequently Moritz, sitting beside her, began to talk with them in Polish, in order to give them countenance.

Kessler said very little, but sat glowering, his head sunk between his shoulders, with unfriendly eyes glancing at Sophy, as she talked gaily to Moritz; or else watching the footmen, who, aware of the fact, moved about with tremulous and hasty steps. He felt himself torn with jealousy. Willing as he had been to give her up, he now—at the sight of

her merry face wreathed in smiles, bright and beautiful and turned towards Moritz, and of the eagerness with which she gave ear to what he said; seeing, too, how often it made her change colour, and with what pretty coquetry she poured out the wine for him—felt that jealousy had quite taken possession of his mind. Kessler would have ordered her to come and sit by his side had he not felt ashamed to exhibit his weakness so publicly. So he sat there, gloomy, depressed alike by the violence of his passion and the necessity of keeping it under control.

After supper they adjourned to the drawing-room, fitted up in Oriental style. All along the walls there were big sofas, upholstered with silk and heaped with cushions; the walls were hung with a fabric of green silk shot with yellow, and a greenish-yellow carpet was spread over the whole floor. In front of each sofa the footmen had put some low square-shaped stands, on which they placed many a bottle; they then drew back a curtain, which unveiled a sort of platform where a quartet of violinists were about to play.

Each guest flung himself down upon the sofa, in the most comfortable posture that occurred to him, and began to drink; at first, liqueurs and cognac poured into the cups of coffee supplied again and again by the footmen. Then it was the turn of the wines, of which they partook in such quantities, and of so many sorts, that they were presently very much flustered.

The music went on. The dancing-girls vanished to change costumes, according to plan. Meanwhile the servants brought a thick linoleum floor-cloth, well rubbed with chalk, into the middle of the room. The din went on increasing; laughter and jests passed round the room, together with the factory girls, bandied about from sofa to sofa, pushed hither and thither, kissed, pinched, hugged, forced to drink, until they so completely lost their senses that they whirled madly round to the sounds of the quartet music, which made the blood seethe in their veins, go up to their heads, and drive them into frenzy.

“Let the dance begin!” Kessler shouted, with his arm

round Sophy's waist. She was completely drunk, and in such uproarious spirits that she would every now and then wallow on the sofa with piercing screams.

And now the dancing-girls came in, with timbrels that they held in their uplifted hands. They were almost unclothed, wearing as they did only a few folds of gauze, which concealed nothing. Standing in mid-hall, they struck their timbrels in cadence. The music thereupon fell into a strain so soft, so faint, as to be scarcely audible; and the dance-melody was struck up by the impassioned tremolo of a flute, like the song of a mating bird.

The girls began the "*danse du ventre*," at the outset rather lifelessly and listlessly. But what with the wine they were literally drenched with in the intervals of rest, and what with the thrilling melody of the flute, they caught fire at last, and it was with the utmost animation that they performed that weird, infamous Eastern dance, with its epileptic throbs, its ripples of convulsive back and forward quivering, its fever of lascivious desire—the dance of lubricity at its maddest. The flute was continually pouring forth those sweet warbling, passionate strains, possessing all who heard them with an uncontrollable desire to plunge into the deepest whirlpool of lust. Eyes blazed, bosoms heaved, lips burst into gasping cries, arms were stretched out towards the dancers, and sounds of noisy kisses were drowned in the wild lewd excitement that prevailed throughout the hall.

Guffaws and babbling and screams and the clinking of glasses united to make up a deafening uproar, above which there rose only the melodious notes of the flute; and the dancers danced with ever greater and grosser sensuality and coarseness. On the background of the silk-tapestried walls the frenzied motions of those bodies, half seen through thin clouds of gauze, stood out like a vision of revelling Bacchantes. Roars of delighted laughter resounded through the room.

Suddenly Sophy lifted up her head with a long look from her eyes, now set in her head with drink. "Oh, those swine, those abominable swine!" she cried, with instinctive horror

and indignation, bursting into a violent fit of maudlin tears. Kessler beckoned to a footman to carry her to her bedroom.

But the merry-making of the Lodzian princes lasted; lasted till they could make merry no longer.

CHAPTER XV



“AY I offer you some more tea, Mr. Joseph?” said Anne.

“No, thanks, madam,” young Yaskulski answered, blushing and bowing, as he rose to continue reading the paper to old Mr. Adam.

Anne seated herself in a deep rocking-chair. As she rocked herself, she listened a little to Joseph’s reading, but more to the expected footsteps of Charles, and often turned round towards the veranda door.

“Don’t let the samovar go out! Mr. Charles is sure to come in presently,” she called out to Matthew in the kitchen, and walked about the room, and peered through each of the windows into the dark. She stood for a moment with her brow touching the glass, and then she again seated herself in the chair, and waited with growing impatience.

It was not the first time since her arrival in Lodz a couple of months previously that she had to wait so. This interval had glided away very swiftly for Charles, but slowly indeed for her and for old Mr. Boroviecki. Immured as they were in the place—a cottage and a miserable strip of garden instead of Kurov—they were both of them afflicted with love-sickness for the country and its vast expanses, and found it hard to get used to the new surroundings of their life.

Not only did Anne suffer from this, but also from various mortifications that continually beset her, and from the secret distress of which Charles was the source. She had so ordered her day as to have as much work to do as possible, and to fill all her time with work. Notwithstanding, something undefinable was slowly preying on her spirits. She was quite at a loss what to think of Charles. She believed, nay, was

convinced that he loved her; and yet, since she had come to dwell in Lodz, she at times was assailed with doubt on that point. As yet she knew nothing for sure, and felt her suspicions to be shameful; but her heart had guessed at the melancholy truth.

Daily and with sore bewilderment she was finding him out—him that she had taken for her ideal of manhood, whom she had arrayed in all the brightness of her own bright soul, of whom she had thought only with pleasure and pride, whom she had loved from the very first, her future husband and (as she would call him in the secret of her heart) her "own dear boy"—to be quite a different man, most unlike him she had worshipped. Every day this conviction grew deeper in her mind and caused her greater pain. True, he at times was kind to her, affectionate, loving, ready to do whatever she wished. But then again he at times showed himself cold, harsh, inexorable, treating her country customs with relentless irony. He would then, in a manner most distressing to her, make a mock of her charity to the poor, and even of what he called her parochial ideals; and the steely glint in his eyes would inflict bitter agony on her, who saw with what cold indifference he looked upon her pain.

This behaviour of his she excused, as he himself used to do when in a better mood, by ascribing it to the strain on his nerves and the numerous worries which he had to undergo whilst building the factory. She had believed him at first, and borne patiently with his wayward humour. She had even reproached herself for not being his comforter, or able to make him so attached to her as to forget all his troubles and difficulties in her presence. She had also attempted to play that part, but abandoned it, on noticing a shade of irony in the grateful look with which he answered her.

Besides, there was one thing that was beyond her to attempt. Loving him as she did in all simplicity and frankness, and ready as she was to sacrifice everything for him, she was undemonstrative in her love, and quite incapable of binding him with those thousand ties—looks, speeches, touches, faltering words, and all those enchanting artifices—

which attract men so powerfully, and which they are so apt to take for true love; though it is all but mere coquetry, or the fulsome demureness of girls who are bent on making a good match. Her noble straightforward nature shrank from any such tricks, and despised the notion of captivating the affections of any man by such enticements. The sense of personal dignity was very strong in her, as also of the dignity of human nature, in which she gloried.

"Why is he so late?" she asked herself in distress.

Time crawled on very lazily. Hour after hour struck on the clock, each time the ensuing silence growing deeper, with only Joe's voice sounding more feebly as sleep was coming over him. At last, having read the paper through, he prepared to go.

"Joe, where do you live?" old Mr. Boroviecki asked.

"In Baum's factory, sir."

"Ah, is he better?"

"He says he's quite well and nothing is the matter with him. Dr. Vyoscki was there to-day and wanted to examine him, but Mr. Baum flew into a passion, and all but turned him out."

"Is the factory going still?"

"Only ten of the looms are still at work.—Good-night, sir; good-night, madam." He made his bow and went out.

"Max told me yesterday," Anne said, "that the whole place will have to be closed by October. Old Baum seems quite out of his mind; he will stay all night in the factory and work the looms. Max, night before last, found him in the great chamber going from loom to loom and setting them to work.—Ah! here comes Charles!" she exclaimed joyfully, rising, as Charles came in, shook hands, and flung himself down on a chair.

"Have you been in town?" said his father.

"As usual," was the surly response, for Charles was annoyed at his father's question; but noticing that Anne looked ill at ease, he cleared his brow, and continued in a gentler tone: "I could not be here for dinner; had to start for Piotrkov. Forgive me for not letting you know; I had no

time; it was quite unexpected.—Has Mrs. Travinska been here?"

"She has, and in the afternoon Mrs. Müller and her daughter called on us."

"Mrs. Müller and her daughter?" he repeated, rather taken aback.

"On a neighbourly visit. They are very nice people, and praise you very much. But they complain you neglect them."

"How can they? I only went to see them now and then." He gave a scornful shrug.

Anne looked surprised. Mada had told her explicitly that in spring Charles used to take tea with them almost every day.

"Isn't that Müller girl a perfect goose?"

"She seemed quite a sensible person, very simple-minded and straightforward; too straightforward if anything—I can't make out, though, why Max always speaks of her with so much dislike."

"Max gets easily prejudiced," he answered, though he knew why his partner did not like Miss Müller.

He took his tea hastily, just to avoid paining Anne, for he did not care to take anything. Meanwhile he thought over the Müllers' visit, and why they had made it. Had Anne herself sought their acquaintance?—Perhaps.

He asked for particulars, and she gave them all, saying in all sincerity that she had been not a little surprised.

"Then," he reflected with annoyance, "this must be Mada's doing. Yes, she's a sharp girl."

As he had not yet quite abandoned the thought of one day becoming old Müller's son-in-law, he would have much preferred the two girls to have remained apart; his position would in that case have been far less awkward.

"You will have," he said carelessly, "to pay them a return visit."

"I don't much like making new acquaintances."

"That I quite understand; besides, they are not of your class at all."

"Well, one of these days I shall call on them along with Father, and that will be the end of it."

He then casually related, as facts he regretted, several instances of the vulgarity and the upstart whims both of Mada and her father, exaggerating what was ridiculous in their ways on purpose to deter Anne from any further acquaintance with them, if she had had that idea. He then enlarged on the topic of his own trials and troubles.

Anne listened very attentively, looking with pity at his haggard face and dark rings round his eyes. When he had ended, "Is the work nearly finished?" she asked.

"In October I must absolutely set the factory going, if only in one of the departments; yet there's still so much to do, I'm afraid to think of it."

"You will take a good long spell of rest later."

"Rest? But later there will be still more to do! For whole years I shall be forced to strain every nerve to the utmost, so that by some contrivance, under fortunate circumstances, with good customers and plenty of capital, the business may be got to stand upon its own legs; till then I cannot dream of resting."

"But will this be continual—this wearing, fevered life you are leading now?"

"Yes, continual! And there is into the bargain the dread lest all I have done may come to nothing."

"You would not have to toil so hard in Kurov."

"Are you speaking seriously?"

"What she says, I say too," his father put in, looking up from the game of solitaire he was playing.

"I have long thought it over," she said. And nestling closer to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she set about depicting the happiness and peace of a country life in glowing and vivid colours.

He was smiling, but with pity. "Let her give the reins to her fancy if she chooses," he thought. He took up one end of her long, thick tress, and inhaled the wonderful fragrance of her hair.

"We should be happy there and at rest, and no one should

interfere with our joys; they would be lasting and quiet," she continued, warming to her subject.

But Charles was all the time comparing the words she said with other words—those of so many other women who, fascinated by their love, had dreamed of bliss at his side. Only an hour ago Lucy, from a tryst with whom he had now come, was telling him just the same. Still smiling, he laid the tips of his fingers upon the cool hands of his betrothed. He felt that they gave him no electric thrill, as Lucy's did, and that Anne's were much less fair to see.

Anne went on, weaving a fairy web of dreams and desires, which she sincerely hoped might be realized.

"But where," he said to himself, "where have I heard all this before? And from whose lips? Ah!" And suddenly there flashed on his memory the evenings he had spent with Mrs. Likiert and many another woman besides; and many a face rose up, and many a kiss, and many a plighted troth, and many an embrace of loving arms.

He was very much fatigued after that day's appointment, and had been so entirely under the spell of Lucy that he still felt strongly agitated. He fell into a reverie brought on by nervous exhaustion; and, while hearing Anne's voice, he seemed to hear yet another—the voice of all his former loves, risen in his memory from the dead. There they were, calling to him, thronging around him, touching him; he almost heard the rustling of their dresses, almost saw a gleam of faces white as alabaster; their smiles were about him, and their wondrously enchanting words; and the vision was materializing.

He shook it from him, put his arm round Anne's neck, and pressed to her brow those lips of his, still hot from the kisses of another. In her surprise at a caress so little expected, she raised her face to his. At that moment, the very first of such close meeting between them, he saw her to be—unspeakably sweet indeed, tender, attractive, full of dignity and goodness—but no, not beautiful!

His icy look of appraisal moved Anne strangely, and brought a hot flush to her cheek. She pulled a silk hand-

kerchief out of his breast pocket and dabbed her face to cool it.

"What perfume is this?" she asked, to give herself countenance; that look of his had damped all her enthusiasm.

"Violets, if I remember well."

"No, it is mingled heliotropes and roses," she answered, with a smile and a careless glance at the handkerchief.

It was an exquisite piece of silk, with lace borders, and an embroidered monogram in the centre. He had snatched it from Lucy, and one end had been peeping out of his breast pocket.

"Ah, yes, you are right; heliotropes, of course." And he seized the handkerchief and put it back—just a trifle too hastily. "Against my orders, Matthew will keep on scenting my things. Better if he took proper care to let no articles get changed in the wash." He tried to say this offhandedly, but he knew that Anne disbelieved his clumsy explanation.

He sat a little longer, endeavouring to bring the conversation to a point of tender intimacy, but Anne's cold look of suspicion baffled his attempts completely, and he took his leave in a short time.

Anne, as was her wont, went to see him out; Matthew was there holding a lantern.

"Matthew, you must not put such strong scents on your master's handkerchiefs," she remarked.

"But I don't scent them at all; master has no scents in his room," he answered drowsily.

Anne shot a glance at Charles, saw his manifest confusion, and started at its evident significance.

"Will you come to church with us to-morrow?"

"If possible, I will; but I'll let you know in time." And he was gone.

Anne went in slowly, had the lights put out, gave directions for the morrow, said good-night to old Mr. Adam, and was in her bedroom at last. She stood for some time by her window, passing the facts in review as she looked up into the depths of the sky.

"After all," she concluded, "these things do not concern me."

That was false. They did concern her—much more than she would have wished. But her pride forbade her to admit that she saw the meaning of the facts before her; it was too humiliating, too distressing.

"I am certainly not going to stand in the way of his happiness!" she said the next morning, after a sleepless night; and in the wounded pride of her feelings she took a stubborn resolve not to weep, not to complain, and to shut within her heart whatever she had to endure.

At breakfast she looked as serene as usual. The maidservant informed her that a deputation of working-people wished very much to speak with her. There were quite a number of men and women on the veranda, clad in their best, and looking very solemn.

When she came in, Soha, a wagoner in Boroviecki's pay, advanced, kissed her hand, and bowed almost to her feet, according to the immemorial custom; then, stepping back a pace or two, he cleared his throat, looked at his wife by his side, and began thus in a loud voice:

"Well we have taken counsel together and come to thank you our beloved mistress for the lad whose bones were broken and ye healed him and likewise for that woman the widow of Michael killed by the fall of the scaffolding and for the children who are left orphans after Michael was killed by the fall of the scaffolding and for the kindness ye have shown to all of them."

The sentence was delivered in one breath, the orator turning now to his wife, now to his fellow labourers, who nodded and moved their lips as if speaking together.

He paused to take breath, and continued: "We are poor forsaken creatures and you lady though not one of us have been as good to us as any mother could have been our people unites to thank you for your goodness with all our hearts presents we bring none presents—you! you fellows! Kiss the lady's hand! kiss her feet!" he shouted to the workmen, thus

cutting short his speech, which he did not know how to finish.

After this energetic peroration all came round Anne, some kissing her hands, and some, more bashful, only her elbows. Anne, overcome with joy and deeply moved, could not utter a syllable; so old Mr. Adam spoke a few words on his own account, and ordered a glass of vodka for each of them.

Towards the end of this scene Charles came in and guessed what was going forward. He ordered drinks all round a second time and a bit of breakfast for all, and shook hands very cordially with the working-people, though there was a tinge of irony in his smile. When they had withdrawn, he began to make fun of what had occurred.

"A most moving spectacle! I thought it might be harvest home, only there were no songs, nor wreaths of corn. Garlands of gratitude instead, and grateful hearts singing your bounties!"

"You can laugh at everything, I see, and it's an easy pastime for you, since you engage in it so very frequently," Anne replied, calm externally, but inwardly boiling with anger.

"That's no merit of mine; you give me so many opportunities."

"Thank you for being so straightforward. I am well aware that all I do is in your eyes ludicrous, foolish, petty, parochial—everything is a matter of gibes on your part, which amuse you all the more because they are painful to me. Is not that so?" she said indignantly.

"Each of your words is an accusation, and a grievous one!" Charles replied.

"But each is true."

"No. Absolutely false—fancies of yours that distress me exceedingly!"

"Distress you indeed!" she said with bitter irony.

"Anne—my dear Anne—why will you be so angry? Why poison our lives with trifles such as these? Can you seriously find any insult to you—and criticism of your actions—in these harmless jokes of mine? Let me assure you that I never had any such intention, nor could have!" He pleaded

his cause with much warmth, being truly hurt and mortified by what she had said.

Anne paid no heed to his pleading, and left the room without a word or glance.

Charles went over to his father in the veranda, to complain of what she had said.

"I am no more among the living; I am a dead man. But I'll tell you openly that you are continually hurting Anne, setting her against you. May you never regret what you are doing now!" the old man said, with a sigh, and went on to blame him gently for his neglect of her—his fiancée—and pointed out the innumerable happenings in their daily life when he wounded her out of disregard for her delicate sensibility.

"Antonina," said Charles to Anne's maid, "ask your mistress how soon she will be ready to go to church, and say that the carriage is waiting."

She returned almost immediately, saying her young lady had gone out and left word that she was not going to church that day.

Charles flushed crimson and went out in a rage.

"You have brewed the beer, you must drink it!" his father called out as he went.

Anne, much incensed, had indeed gone to see Nina. She found her alone, sitting in a room where she was drawing with crayons at an easel. The subject was a nosegay of China roses, laid out before her on a ground of beautiful pale-green stuff.

"How good you are to have come! I was just going to write you a word."

"What, are you by yourself?"

"My husband is off to Warsaw, and will not be home till evening. I have enough of drawing, and don't care to read, so I thought of proposing to you a short excursion out of town—just a breath of fresh air. Shall you have time?"

"As much as ever you like."

"But—what of Charles?"

"Surely I am grown up, and free to dispose of both my time and myself."

"Ah—" Nina could not help exclaiming, but said no more, for the footman ushered in Mr. Kurovski. He, on hearing that Mr. Travinski was from home, was about to withdraw.

"No, stay here. We shall dine together, and afterwards have an excursion out of town, all three of us. You will be our protector and comforter, won't you?"

"Your protector, yes."

"But we both absolutely need a comforter."

"Very good. I'll soothe your sufferings, but you must first be sufferers. Only I'll have you know that tears mean nothing to me, and I don't care how much or how fast they may flow."

"Then you don't believe tears mean suffering?"

"Excuse me; I was speaking of women's tears."

"Some have played you false, and you take your revenge on us all!"

"Exactly so: the jilted man is taking his revenge!" he returned, in high spirits.

"He will not be able to do so. We belong to the class of women who never weep. Don't we, Anne?"

"At any rate," was the low reply, "no one shall hear that we suffer, or see us shed tears."

"That's a nobility of soul which I admire; and if I were a lawgiver, I'd make a law that all women should follow your example."

"And no one would obey. To make people happy it is enough if they are thought unhappy by others."

"A big paradox, but with a great deal of truth in it. Man is in his nature essentially a poetical, if not a sentimental animal. A modern Linnæus might well rank us among the 'Lachrymalia.' But no matter for that. Is Charles to be here to-day?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

Kurovski's piercing glance, darted at Anne, saw nothing but the serenest unconcern.

Towards the end of dinner, which (owing to Kurovski's successful exertions to bring Anne into a more cheerful frame of mind) had proved unexpectedly gay, the question where they should go was mooted.

"Not to Helenov at any rate; too many people there to-day."

"We shall go quite out of town. What a pity Travinski is not here! I should have proposed a five-o'clock tea at my diggings. Besides my hut, there's a garden and a little water; we could cool ourselves there."

"Is it far from Lodz?" Anne wanted to know.

"If you take a short cut, something over five versts."

"I suppose there's some sort of farm-work going on there."

"I," he said, "am a landowner, with forty acres of arable land. But—but all the work I do is in my factory. I neither know nor care for farming."

"Well, Charles told me in spring he had seen you sowing barley with your own hands, ever so far away from your laboratory. So there!"

"Charles was joking. I assure you he was," Kurovski declared; for he kept his love of farming a secret, and talked of the occupation as mere clod-hoppers' work.

"Ladies, I'll show you where and how the Lodzian masses take their pleasures," he said, helping them into the carriage, and ordering the coachman to drive over to Milsch's wood.

The town was dead quiet, all the shops were closed, the windows shuttered, the taverns silent, the streets empty and flooded with sultry air, tremulous in the pitiless dazzling sunshine. Along each side-walk the trees stood motionless, with drooping leaves. They were overwhelmed by the mighty heat pouring down from a white-hot sky, which, like a thick woollen covering, overlay the town so completely that not one breath of air blew in from the open to cool the torrid pavements and the baked walls.

Kurovski was very closely studying Anne; and his large hazel eyes, not unlike those of a tiger, watched her features narrowly and with concentration. But she—engaged as she

was in repressing the sense of remorse which came to her now, asking whether she had done well in inflicting such pain upon her Charles—did not notice his scrutiny.

"Is it here we are to stop?" Nina demanded, when the carriage pulled up in front of a large garden-restaurant, whence came floating a tumultuous noise—voices mixed with the sounds of a military brass band.

"We are only going through to the grove."

They made their way through the garden thronged with people and resounding with a deafening uproar. Some hundreds of trees, both large and small, all bearing yellow shrivelled foliage, scantily shaded the trampled grass and the sandy paths and alleys. Dust rose in clouds all about them, settling on the trees, on the many tables, covered with white napery, on the crowds of people seated at them and enjoying the beer that waiters in soiled dress-suits were continually bringing them.

Seated on a raised platform, the military band was playing the "Sentimental Waltz," while in the main building of the restaurant, surrounded by several verandas, dancers were footing it merrily in spite of the intense heat. Some had pulled off their coats, some their waistcoats too, and stamped and kicked and shouted all the more lustily for their scanty attire. Numerous enthusiastic spectators, crowding at the doors and the open windows, were handing tankards of beer to the dancers within, thus showing their appreciation of the performance; but a good many were also dancing outside, amid clouds of dust, to the accompaniment of reports from a shooting-gallery and the rumbling of balls in a bowling-alley, together with the din of toy trumpets all about the garden.

There were also several small boats on a tiny piece of slimy, stagnant water, in which some couples of sweethearts were broiling in the sun, plying their oars with might and main, and singing some popular song, all about groves and love and beer, in tones of languishing tenderness.

"Let us go from here; I can't stand it any longer," Nina said, rising from the table at which they were seated.

"Yes, I fancy you must have had enough of popular amusements and democratic surroundings," Kurovski laughed, as he paid for the beer, which they had not touched.

"Of dust and vulgarity I have enough. Let us go to the grove; perhaps we may get a little fresh air," she said, with her handkerchief to her mouth, for the dust kicked up was more and more stifling.

But there was no fresh air in the grove, either.

"Do they call that a wood?" Anne cried, astounded, coming to a standstill among the trees.

"That's what the Lodzian folk call it." And they went on farther into the grove.

The place was still, but with the stillness of oncoming death. In every direction multitudes of begrimed trunks were seen standing mournfully, their sickly branches hanging down, their life slowly ebbing away, and the shadows which they threw creating a sombre and sinister impression. There they stood, still as if petrified; and if at any time a breath of air played among their boughs, they would rustle faintly, sadly, shuddering like one in a fit of tertian fever, and then were again motionless, plunged, as it were, in a grim and dismal reverie, as they bent over a narrow rivulet contaminated with waste factory products. It traversed the grove, a sinuous streak of coloured liquid amongst the shadows and the blackened trunks, emitting horrible and stifling emanations, and forming in places quagmires and bogs of thin slime. It soaked into the hearts of the mighty trees, whose gigantic roots spread like tentacles far into the earth, little by little sucking up the poisoned ooze, and with it their own death and destruction.

Yet even round those dying trees, there were plenty of people full of boisterous rollicking mirth. Groups were camping all about, barrel-organs playing amain, and accordions without number; and samovars smoked, and children flitted about like butterflies amongst the gloomy shadows. Here and there was dancing, too, and a confused din of many voices mingled with the sounds of the music.

"Their pastimes are a sorry sight!" Anne remarked. "Why

are so few of them heartily enjoying themselves? Why are they not—all of them—shouting, singing, drinking in freedom and rest and life to the very utmost?"

"Why? Because they have not the strength—and, if they had, would not know how," Nina replied. "They rest from yesterday's toil, but have not forgotten it yet, and tomorrow's toil casts its shadow before." And she pointed to several families seated under trees, passive, quite exhausted, and seeming to wonder, as they looked about them, at those that could dance and laugh.

"I should like," Anne cried, "to go out beyond this wood, and catch at least a glimpse of the country."

They did so, but not for long; what they saw was not like what Anne had expected to see. There was only a great expanse of waste land, with brick-kilns scattered about, red factory chimneys, houses several storeys high, and a road deeply strewn with coal-dust, along which some cyclists were trundling their bikes.

Soon they were back in town. Anne went home, thinking to find Charles there. He had not even come in to dine.

In the garden, old Mr. Boroviecki was asleep in his wheelchair. A silence like that of extreme lassitude pervaded the whole dwelling. On the veranda, sparrows twittered and pursued one another; Anne's entrance did not frighten them at all. She walked round the garden, looked into every room, and then—was at a loss what to do further.

She took up a book, and sat down in the veranda; but reading was beyond her power. She stared vacantly at the white clouds gathering in the east, and listened to the Office of the Blessed Virgin, that the maidservant was singing in the kitchen, which recalled the country so powerfully to her, and filled her with such vague yet bitter yearnings, that she melted into tears; why, she could not say. Horribly alone she felt—abandoned, and somehow far away, somewhere beyond the world.

But old Mr. Adam was now calling her; she went out and wheeled him into the veranda.

"Has not Charles been in?" he asked.

"I cannot say, I returned only just now."

They spoke no more, nor did their eyes meet, for a long time. At last the old man said, hesitatingly: "Might we not as well say vespers together?"

"The very thing!" she exclaimed joyfully, and went at once to fetch her prayer-book.

"You see," he said, "this reminds me of Kurov." He took off his hat, and, making the sign of the cross, set to repeating after her the Latin words of the vesper Psalms.

The stillness of early evening grew deeper, as did the approaching twilight, which was spreading its webs of haze over gardens and low thatch-roofed houses. But those roofed with zinc burned bright, as did their windows, in the rays of the setting sun; and the smoke of such factories as still worked on Sundays went up in great rose-coloured whorls and spirals ascending heavenwards.

Until dusk fell, Anne went on reading vespers; her full, clear voice, vibrating with lyrical fervour, echoed through the veranda; and the wild vine-leaves and woodbine and sweet-pea blossoms that climbed up and over the balustrade waved gently, as if in cadence with her words. Far away—a thousand miles away it seemed—the town was beginning to sound with the noise of the returning multitudes, the rattling of cabs, the dull roar of the factories, and the lamentable tunes played by barrel-organs.

Tea was served, but Charles did not make his appearance. With growing impatience, Anne awaited him. After vespers she had felt very calm, and quite resolved to tell him all her torments and misgivings.

He did not come. Instead there came Mrs. Vysocka, wearing an air of mystery and sternness. She spoke much of her son, then of men in general, going long and elaborately into the subject, as the best preliminary for what she had to say.

Anne, growing uneasy as she listened, said at length: "Dear Aunt, pray speak quite openly; neither innuendoes nor beating about the bush is any good."

"Right. Indeed I prefer it so, for I cannot speak properly

otherwise.—Let us go to your room.—And lock the door first!" she added, when they were there.

"Well, Aunt, I am listening," said Anne, settling herself in a low easy-chair, by a table on which a lamp with a bright yellow shade was burning.

"I have come, child, to ask you as a kinswoman may do—whether you are aware of what they say of you and your fiancé?"

"I was not aware that anything could be said," she replied, looking her full in the face.

"And can you guess nothing?"

"Nothing absolutely. I cannot even conceive anything," she said, with such calm that Mrs. Vysocka hesitated to say what she had intended, took two or three turns about the room, and then said with bated breath and keenly scrutinizing looks:

"It is said that Charles would be glad to marry Mada Müller, if—if——"

Anne finished the sentence for her, in a louder key: "If I were not in the way?"

"Then you know?"

"If I do, it is because you have told me."

Both were silent. Anne's head rested on the back of the easy-chair she sat on. She was looking straight before her, but with dim, unseeing eyes. The news had not shaken her to the core and at once, but flooded her consciousness in successive fiery billows. And she received them steadily, and—though she felt an agonizing tremor seize her, she bravely fought against it with all the strength of her will.

"Dearest Anne, pray don't take amiss what I have told you. In all probability it is no more than malicious gossip. I had to let you know. Tell Charles all about it quite openly, for such rumours may destroy even the greatest love. Marry as soon as you can; that will put a stop to slander, and they won't trouble you any more. And do not bear any grudge against me; it was my duty to warn you."

"Dear Aunt, I am very, very grateful." And taking her hand, Anne pressed it to her lips.

"Don't be wretched over it, either; it's nothing but idle talk. Charles has lots of enemies. Many women wanted to marry him, many more were in love; they are disappointed now, and of course take their revenge. And then, other people's happiness is an eyesore to so many!—And now, good-night!"

"Good-night, dear Aunt."

She saw Mrs. Vysocka to the door.

"If you like, I myself will tell Charles."

"No, thanks, I must speak to Charles myself.—Wait a little, I'll dress and go with you to Mrs. Travinska's."

They walked on in silence, for, though her aunt tried to keep up a conversation, Anne scarcely heard her, and answered still less, absorbed as she was, and ever more and more profoundly, in the unexpected tidings.

To get to the Travinskis' it was necessary to traverse Borowiecki's garden and factory; but the latter being closed on Sundays, they passed through the street where Müller's house stood. The windows were open, lighted, and not closely curtained, so that the interior of the rooms was quite visible from outside. Anne would have passed along without looking in, but Mrs. Vysocka looked—and stopped an instant. She was arm in arm with Anne.

All the Müller family were sitting in their parlour, with Charles in their midst. Mada, leaning forward, was telling him something very funny, to which he was giving a most attentive ear.

At the sight, Anne shrank away—and went straight home, without one word to Mrs. Vysocka. She did not weep, neither did she fall into despair, but felt mortally wounded in her self-esteem.

After dinner the next day, Charles tried to make excuses for his absence on the previous evening, but she cut him short, saying curtly and a little haughtily: "You need no excuse. You did as pleased you best. Preferring to be with the Müllers, you spent the evening with them."

Charles was offended. "I fear," he said, "I do not understand you."

"Have you ever tried? I doubt it."

"Why speak to me in this way?"

"Would you have me hold my tongue?"

"Rather you force me to hold mine."

"Oh, I do indeed, when I have to wait the whole day—and wait in vain—for one word from you!" she cried bitterly, but at once regretting her outburst, which she had not had the power to refrain from.

It did not touch Charles, and only put him in a worse humour. Both in looks and in words he showed himself annoyed and bored. Unable to conceal those feelings, he presently took his hat, and said, very coldly: "I am going to Kurov. Have you any matter of business to be settled there?"

"A good many."

"I can settle them for you."

"Thanks, but I shall be there with Father in a few days, and can do all very well by myself."

He bowed and withdrew, but returned directly. He wanted to be on good terms with her again, and perhaps felt something like regret for his treatment of her.

He found Anne where he had left her, seated at the window. She looked at him inquiringly when he entered.

"My dear Anne, why are you so angry with me? In Kurov we were open and straightforward with each other; why not be so now? If I have grieved or annoyed you in any way whatever, I beg you to forgive me; with all my heart I do!"

His voice was low, full of emotion, perfectly modulated; and he had put such an accent of sincerity into what he said that it quite moved him, and he went on to say tenderly: "I have so many worries, so many continual disappointments, that I may sometimes have been rough with you and offended you; but surely you must know that this could never have been deliberate; surely you don't suspect me to have been unkind of set purpose. Anne, please tell me you forgive me.—Do you care for me so little that you will not?—Can it be?"

He bent over her, looking into her eyes. She closed them instantly, they were full of telltale tears. His low voice, so

kind now, warmed her heart indeed, but opened all its wounds as well; it recalled all her silently borne sufferings, all her desires to be loved; it dimmed her eyes and filled her heart with intense bitterness. She could not answer him—she could not. She knew that, had she spoken but one word, she would have simply burst out crying and embraced him. So she said nothing, but sat there icily cold, her pride strengthening her to wrestle with her senses, and forbidding her to manifest what she at that instant felt—the wild longing to love and to trust him in all!

Boroviecki, not receiving any answer, and deeply mortified, took his departure.

But Anne experienced afterwards great remorse for having lost that opportunity to be happy again, and wept long over the loss.

Many days, many weeks elapsed after this scene, in apparent peace and friendliness. They met, they parted in equal good-fellowship on both sides. There was even familiar talk, but no longer with the same cordiality, the same interest, the same belief in one another.

Anne endeavoured to change back to what she had once been—a tender loving fiancée—but found to her dismay that this was now impossible, and that her love for Charles seemed to be dead within her. She always had present in her mind Mrs. Vysocka's warning, which shed a significant light upon certain words that Charles had let drop, but which she only now pieced together and pondered seriously.

There were others, too, who did not spare their less openly given warnings. Max, for instance, would blurt out something now and then; but the chief was Moritz, who would, most gently and in delicately veiled terms, let her know many a detail as to Charles's plans and the hard position he was in. Formerly she had paid no attention to things of the sort; but now she was learning to discover the truth concealed under those hints and ambiguous sayings—the truth, so bitter, so insulting to her dignity, that, had it not been for old Mr. Adam, she would immediately have left Lodz.

Yet at times there were awakenings in her heart; her dying

love would start up with a cry, suppressed at once. In spite of all, she did love him, and could not submit quite passively to her fate. Externally there was no break between them, but they were both drifting further and further apart.

As to Boroviecki, entirely taken up by the building of his factory, now approaching completion, he had but little either of time or of attention to give to his fiancée, though he felt that Anne was more and more low-spirited, and seemed to move in an atmosphere of chilly indifference. He intended to settle everything, once the factory was started; meanwhile, being ill at ease in her house, he went oftener to see Miss Müller, and his trysts with Lucy became more frequent.

CHAPTER XVI



SINCE October the first, a manufactory of cotton goods, under the firm: Charles Boroviecki & Co., has been established. Bonds, promissory notes, &c., will be signed either by C. Boroviecki or by M. Welt.

Having read over again this item of commercial news, Boroviecki took it to Yaskulski.

"This has to be sent to the papers to-day, and to-morrow to a certain number of firms, the addresses of which will be given you by Mr. Moritz."

He then went out into the big courtyard, which still was littered with rubbish and with pieces of machinery. Although the factory was now officially started, in reality only the spinning department was as yet in working order; but the other departments were being made ready at full speed. For various reasons Charles could not and would not await their final completion. The spinning-room alone, therefore, had been set working; and this was the day fixed for the starting of the machinery.

Charles moved about in a state of extraordinary excitement and disquietude. In the spinning department he thoroughly examined the results of the trials, of which Max was the director. Max was all over perspiration with work, husky with shouting, exhausted, begrimed, rushing about from chamber to chamber, stopping a machine, adjusting it, starting it again, and all the time attending with a watchful eye to the whirring spindles, and looking carefully over the yarns that were spun.

Old Yaskulski just then came in and whispered to Charles that a person was waiting for him in the office, wanted to see him instantly and would take no denial.

"Who can it be? Don't you know the man?"

"I'm not sure," Yaskulski stammered, "but I think it's Mr. Zuker."

"Zuker? Zuker!" Charles repeated, not a little upset, and with an odd feeling at his heart as if it had stopped beating. "I am coming; tell him to wait a bit."

"Zuker—wants to see me!—What's that, I wonder?—Is it possible that——?" He stopped, afraid to finish the sentence.

Zuker sat in the office, close to the window, with eyes cast down, and hands on the top of his stick. At Boroviecki's entrance he ignored the other's extended hand, and, omitting the usual salutations, glared at him with fiery eyes.

Charles, though he contrived to hide his uneasiness, felt like a man entrapped. Those eyes burned into him, confused him, intimidated him. A mad impulse came over him to get away; but he controlled himself, even to stilling his heart-throbs, shut the window to lessen the uproar of the workmen drinking close at hand, offered Zuker a chair, and said leisurely: "I am delighted to see you, and only regret not to be able to give you much time; for you see we are starting our factory to-day."

He dropped heavily into a chair, feeling that he could not just then have spoken a single word more; what he had said was half-consciously uttered.

Zuker took a crumpled letter out of his pocket and flung it on to the desk.

"Read that!" he said in a hoarse voice, gazing intently into Charles's face.

It was a coarse vulgar charge concerning the relations of Charles with Lucy. Boroviecki read it through slowly. He wanted to gain time, so as not to give himself away, and to maintain his cool impassive attitude under the persistent scrutinizing gaze of Zuker's burning eyes, which pierced him to the very soul. He read and returned it, at a loss what to say to the man.

Then came a protracted, agonizing pause. Zuker gazed on,

all his powers concentrated in that one ravenous, raging look, eager to unveil the mystery hid behind Boroviecki's grey eyes. The latter lowered them from time to time, mechanically shifting some article on his desk, while it was borne in upon him that one minute more of that unspeakable torture of suspense would force him to yield himself up.

But Zuker rose from his chair, asking in a low voice: "What am I to think of this, Mr. Boroviecki?"

"That is a matter which concerns you alone," was the reply; for Charles was uncertain whether Lucy had not confessed everything. His legs shook under him, and he felt stabbing pains all over his head.

"Am I to take this for your answer?"

"Why, what else would you have? Should I—I!—answer so vile a calumny?"

"But tell me what I am to do, what I am to think of this letter?"

"Seek out the writer, clap him in jail for libel, and say nothing—not one word—to anyone about the matter. I may help you in your search, for this touches me too—and nearly."

He had by now quite recovered his self-possession, for he understood that Lucy had not spoken. He raised his head, looking Zuker calmly and fearlessly in the face. Zuker took a few undecided steps about the room, and, seating himself once more, drew several deep breaths and proceeded to speak with a violent effort.

"Mr. Boroviecki, I am a man just as you are. I too have my feelings, and even some sense of honour as well—and I call upon you in the name of God Almighty—I come to get an answer to my question. What this letter says, is it true—or is it not?"

"*It is not!*" Boroviecki returned, with a strong stress on the words.

"I am a Jew, a common Jew—you know I shall neither shoot you nor call you out; so, whatever you may say, what can I do to you? Nothing—nothing!—I am a plain man who

loves my wife with all my heart, and work very hard for her to have every possible comfort and be as happy as a queen. Do you know that I had her brought up at my own expense—that she is everything to me?—And now this letter tells me—you are her lover! I thought the whole world had crashed down upon my head.—And she is to bear a child in the next few months! You know what that means. I have been expecting it these four years; yes, these four years!—And now—I am told this!—Whose child is it? How can I tell?—But you will, you shall tell me! I must know the truth!” he cried out on a sudden, rushing at Boroviecki with clenched fists, like a madman.

“I have already told you,” Charles replied calmly, “that this is nothing but a foul slander.”

Zuker stood still for a moment with arms outstretched, and then sank limply into his chair.

“You—noblemen—are fond of amusing yourselves with other men’s wives.—You don’t care what becomes of them afterwards—you never trouble your heads about their shame and the disgrace to their families. You are—— Oh, the Lord God will smite you for that, and spare you not!” Here his voice shook, failed, broke as though something within him had burst, and changed to a wailing sound, while big tears trickled slowly out of his red eyelids down his grey cheeks and beard—drops of unutterable bitterness.

He went on speaking, but grew calmer by degrees. He was impressed by Boroviecki’s behaviour, by the kindly expression on his face, his look of sincerity, and the profound sympathy which showed itself unmistakably there—all these much inclined him to think the letter a lie.

Boroviecki, with his head resting on his hand, listened to him, looking straight into the other’s face. At the same time, and unnoticed by Zuker, he scribbled a few words on a scrap of paper in the drawer of his desk that stood open. They were:

“Confess nothing. Deny all. He is here and suspects. Burn this. This evening, same place as last time.”

He contrived to get the letter into an envelope, and went to the telephone connecting the house with the factory.

"Matthew! bring some wine and soda-water to the office here.—I have ordered wine, for I see how upset and tired you are. Believe me, I feel the profoundest sympathy for your position; and as to this false accusation, do not trouble any more about it."

Zuker started. It seemed to him that in Boroviecki's voice and features at that moment there was something that rang false. But he could not follow up his impression, Matthew just then coming in with the wine, which Charles poured out into a tumbler and handed to the old man.

"Drink this, it will do you good.—Matthew!" he called out of the window, and, running out after him, put the letter into his hand, with the order to deliver it directly without saying from whom it came, and to come back at once—with an answer, if possible.

All this had taken place so swiftly that Zuker had no suspicion of what was going forward. Charles meanwhile walked about the room, giving him particulars concerning the new factory, wishing to detain him until Matthew should be back. Zuker, though he seemed to listen, heard nothing.

After an interval of silence, he resumed: "Mr. Boroviecki, I adjure you, by all the saints you believe in—are the contents of this letter true, or are they false?"

"I have told you before, and give you my word of honour now, there is no word of truth in them."

"Then swear it. If you swore it, what you said would be true. It could not be a lie. Yes, to take an oath is a weighty matter, but it concerns all my life, my wife's, the child's, ay, and your own too. Yes, your own too! You will swear to me on this image—the image of the Virgin of Chenstohova—which I know to be most sacred for you Poles—you will swear that what the letter says is a falsehood!" he cried, pointing with both arms to the image which Anne had set up over the office door.

"You have my word that I have but very seldom seen

your wife at all, and am not even sure whether she knows who I am."

"Swear it then!" Zuker shouted once more, with such energy that Charles was more than dismayed. The old man, livid, trembling in every limb, once more repeated his appeal.

"Well, then, on this sacred image I swear to you that I neither have now, nor have ever had, anything to do with your wife; and that the letter I have seen is a tissue of lies from beginning to end!"

These words he uttered very solemnly, with his hands uplifted towards the image. There was in his voice a note of absolute sincerity. Sincere he was indeed in his determination to save Lucy at no matter what price; and Zuker threw the letter down on the floor and trampled upon it.

"Yes, I believe you. You have saved my life. And now I trust you, just as I trust myself, just as I trust Lucy. Count upon me. I shall never forget this—never!" he cried in exceeding great joy and supremely happy.

Matthew came in out of breath, and gave Charles a letter, in which there were only these words:

"Shall be there. Love! Love!"

"I must go now and see my wife; she knows nothing, but I have distressed her very much. Now I am all right. All is well with me, and so well that I'll whisper a secret to you. Have an eye on Moritz and Grosplik; they mean to crush you.—So, till we meet again, dear Mr. Boroviecki."

"Many thanks for your warning, but I can't quite make it out."

"I may not say any more.—Good-bye and God bless your father and your fiancée and all your children!"

"Thanks heartily. Should anyone happen to send you any more letters, pray let me know. This one I'll keep by me, and seek out the informer."

"Oh, I'll get the scoundrel convicted and sent to Siberia for a century! Dear Mr. Boroviecki, I am your friend for ever and ever!"

He fell on his neck and kissed him, and walked away completely satisfied.

"Moritz—Grosplik!" Charles reflected. "They mean to crush me, do they? That's serious."

He thought over the matter so deeply that he forgot all about the anonymous letter, his oath, and even the scene with Zuker, much as it had tried his nerves.

Finding no one at home, and as twilight was coming on, he got into a cab, ordered the hood to be pulled forward, and drove off to meet Lucy at the appointed place. After more than an hour's wait, which made him rather nervous, he saw her on the side-walk. He leaned out to her and she got in, throwing her arms round his neck and smothering him with kisses.

"Well, Charles, what has been the matter?" she asked.

He told her all.

"I could not guess what made him come back in such a good humour. He brought me this set of sapphires, which I had to put on instantly. We are going to the theatre to-night; he wants me to go, and will have it absolutely."

"Well, this shows we ought to avoid seeing each other for a time," Charles rejoined, adding: "if only to lull suspicion." And he embraced her.

"He said he would take me to some relations of his in Berlin, for all the time of my—you know."

She nestled close to him like a child.

"That's good; then nothing can be said against us."

"But you'll come to see me there, Charles? I should certainly die if you did not. Will you come?" she said, pleadingly.

"I will, Lucy."

"Do you love me still?"

"Don't you know I do?"

"Do not be offended; but now you are—so changed—so cold—not like my darling of old times."

"Dear, do you think such feelings as ours can last quite for ever?"

"Yes," she answered in all sincerity, "for my love grows stronger every day."

"That's good, Lucy, very good; but you must consider the position we are in. Things cannot possibly always remain as they are."

"Oh, Charles, Charles!" she moaned, shrinking away as though he had given her a stab.

"Speak lower, dear; why should the driver overhear us? Now, do not take amiss what I am going to say. I do love you, but it will not do for us to see each other so often. You understand that I cannot endanger your peace at home, nor expose you to your husband's vindictiveness. We have to be cautious."

"I'll give up everything to go with you, Charles! I won't go home; I won't bear any longer the tortures I have borne.—I can't.—Take me, Charles!" she murmured passionately, pressing to his side and covering his face with kisses. And indeed, her love was so frantic that, had he but been willing, she would really have abandoned everything and fled with him.

Such wild, extravagant love terrified him, however, and he had a great mind to tell her on the spot that he had enough of it. But he thought it would be too hard on her, who had nothing in the world but that love. And moreover he apprehended in that case some explosion on her part, which might end in compromising him too. He endeavoured to quiet her, but found it hard to efface the impression his words had left.

"When are you leaving Lodz?"

"The day after to-morrow. He is to take me himself.—Oh, come to me, Charles, come to me!—And you must be present afterwards, and see—*our* child," she whispered in his ear.—"Charles!" she cried suddenly, "kiss me again—as you used to do. Kiss me—kiss me hard—with all your might!"

But when he had kissed her, she drew away from him, and sat weeping in a corner in spasmodic bursts, and bewailing his want of love. He did his best to comfort and calm her, but it did no good; and she at last became so hysterical

that he had to drive to the chemist's for a sedative. It was no easy task to bring her round.

"Do not be displeased, Charles," she said, in the intervals of her tears. "I am so miserable, so wretched! I have a feeling that I shall never, never see you again!" And before he could prevent her, she was on her knees before him, clasping his knees, beseeching him in words that burst forth from a heart full of love and of despair to love her and not doom her he loved to unending solitude and torture! She flew to his bosom, hugged him in her arms, kissed him, cried over him; and notwithstanding that now, moved with pity, he spoke to her in words of the most ardent love, still that dread, that horrible dread which comes on those who die in full possession of their senses, gripped and wrung her heart with dire agony.

Fatigued at last, worn out with weeping and sorrow, she let her head drop on his breast, and remained long silent, grasping his hand; but her tear-drops still trickled down her cheeks, and now and again a sob would burst forth. When at length they parted, he had been compelled to give a promise that he would be at the station to see her off, though from a distance; and that he would write to her every week. He was wrong, he felt, but unable to act otherwise, given her mental state.

He drove home utterly exhausted, weighed down by her grief and the tears she had shed, and quite unnerved by the anguish that thrilled in her voice. "The devil take all love-making with other men's wives!" he swore as he entered his lodgings.

CHAPTER XVII



THE factory, or rather only one of its sections—the spinning department—was now in full swing, and Max was toiling at it with all his might. For whole days he never left the premises. As usual in the beginnings, the machinery was often out of order, and he had to play the parts at once of workman, smith, mechanic, and manager, all in one, present everywhere and doing everything, almost by himself. But how those first packages of yarn, made up, ready for sale, stamped with the title of the firm, delighted him! He esteemed himself paid in full for all his pains.

Boroviecki was most busily engaged in getting the other departments in readiness, a result he was anxious to attain before the winter season set in.

As to Moritz, he had taken in hand all the commercial and financial aspects of the concern. He, too, worked with untiring zeal. Work for the factory was work for himself, he thought; for he was becoming more and more completely its owner, as more and more of his capital was sunk in it. Charles had no more ready money; but Moritz, partly in his own name, partly in the names of his agents (chief of whom was Stach Vilchek), quietly supplied the cash needful for salaries and working expenses, while he employed other men to buy up for him Boroviecki's debentures and bills of exchange.

He now saw how right Grosplik had been, anticipating that, Boroviecki's factory once set in motion, those purchasers who had lost on shoddy goods they had bought would be likely to turn in the opposite direction. Many an agent dealing with first-class houses, and tradesmen with wealthy

and refined customers, had begun to inquire about the quality of the goods supplied by Boroviecki & Co.

But his fears were groundless. He had incautiously told them to Charles, who merely laughed at him.

"Any such thing is quite out of the question. Just consider: is it possible for our firm to compete with any one? Bucholc turns out a million metres annually; Shaya Mendelsohn has almost as many on the market; can our fifteen or twenty thousand make the least difference to them? Whose sales can we injure, pray? Note this besides; my aim is to produce goods not yet made in this country, and hitherto imported from abroad. If I succeeded well; nay, if I only got enough money to enlarge my factory in a short time—then, indeed, competition with shoddy goods would be a possibility. It's my dream, and I must realize it some day."

Moritz was silenced and withdrew.

Even had he not spoken, Charles had, ever since Zuker's warning, been keeping a watchful eye on him. He noticed with anxiety that Moritz was becoming too pushful in money matters, and had put too much of his capital into the business. This had given him much self-assurance, and he had more than once set his own will and ideas against those of Boroviecki. He was sometimes intolerably arrogant as well, and even rude; but Boroviecki merely ground his teeth and held his tongue, knowing himself helpless, because pecuniarily dependent upon him. "Money! money!" was then his mental cry of agony; and when he considered his own factory and compared it with the huge works of his neighbour Müller, he would feel a bitter pang of jealousy, and also of discontent with himself. He forgot that Müller's works had been steadily growing for thirty years, pavilion by pavilion; that those mighty walls, echoing with the din of noisy work, were the outcome of a long lapse of time; and he longed to stand on the same footing as Müller—and at once!

He calculated that, even were he to succeed as well as ever he could expect, his net income would this year be smaller than his annual salary at Bucholc's. The very thought overwhelmed him with shame. He desired to have a speedily

assured position; to be in the midst of hundreds of machines, of thousands of men, all working indefatigably, and producing millions; he yearned for the might and uproar of a great industry, such as he had been accustomed to witness at Bucholc's works, whereas all the departments of his miniature factory would together employ but three hundred men! Instead of soaring, he had to creep.

His self-esteem was outraged by so puny a result; with such far-reaching ambition he felt suffocated in that atmosphere of petty gains and achievements, of bargainings for kopeks, of infinitesimal savings. It revolted him. He simply loathed the necessity for seeking such lubricants and colours and fuel as came cheapest; especially did he loathe the continual, everlasting want of money.

"If it goes on like this, we shall have to fall back upon shoddy!" he said one day to Moritz.

"And consequently make much more money," was the other's reply.

In this frame of mind Charles spent several weeks of hard and strenuous labour. At last the whole factory was at work. Now, so long as it was only yarn that was made, the business went on briskly; after the spring catastrophe, and when autumn came, with an increased demand for goods, cotton was both dear and much sought after, so that the firm could sell the yarn off almost as soon as it was spun. But, the other sections being now in full activity, the cloth had to be quite finished off and warehoused in expectation of the selling season, which began only about midwinter. Meanwhile fresh occasions for expenditure of every description were continually arising, and instead of Boroviecki's credit increasing, it dwindled almost to zero.

The conspiracy which Grosalik had formed against Charles was working together, and in close union, surrounding the factory with a ring of iron, sapping the confidence of the public, refusing all credit, and spreading malicious rumours of the firm's impending downfall. All this tried Boroviecki's patience sorely, and caused him to turn more often in thought towards Müller, doubting whether or not to ask for

his assistance, offered so many a time. He still held back, notwithstanding; not so much on account of Anne (for he shrewdly guessed under what conditions alone Müller would be willing to assist him) as out of pride and a certain natural obstinacy that used to grow in proportion to the difficulties encountered.

At moments of complete unreserve, when he told himself the naked truth, he would make fun of what he thought his nonsensical prejudices, and curse his foolish subservience to romantic ideas—for so he named the scruples which withheld him from breaking with Anne and taking Mada to wife. But he yielded to them, all the same. If he did, it was perhaps because he now saw Anne every day, and began to understand what state she was in—no longer the laughing, artless, trustful girl of old days, but a woman; very mournful and absolutely resigned. He felt regret for her.

And meanwhile, what of Anne? She was no more than a shadow of what she had been—wasted away, the smile gone from her lips, and wearing a look of deep and—as she thought—lifelong sorrow, that had taken its place.

She would spend whole days sitting with old Mr. Adam. In the first days of November he had been again struck down by paralysis, and was brought back to life with much difficulty; now he lay a helpless wreck, unable to do more than move his hands a little, and mumble a few words. She had to tend him now, supporting every one of his whims, which were often quite childish. She read to him, and tried to invent various occupations; for the old man, weary of lying on his bed all day, could not live without something to do. All this she did, if not with pleasure, at least from a sense of attachment to the old man.

None the less, his illness caused the house to be yet more desolate than it had been; it had become like a grave in which she was forced to dwell. The days dragged by with crushing monotony, bringing with them no change either in the state of the sufferer, or in her relations with Charles.

He now spent his evenings more often at home, for his father's sake, talking about his work, and now and then con-

versing with Anne. His conversation brought her no joy, however, and their mutual want of sympathy grew still more marked.

That she felt more at ease when Charles was away she would not admit, even to her own heart. Yet his haggard, toil-worn face, and the dejected looks he would from time to time cast at her, both disturbed and grieved her. She would at such times blame herself for being the cause of all his troubles and sufferings, and responsible for everything.

Such moods could of course not last long. They were followed by phases of offended pride, as she contemplated the depths of that frigid, egotistical heart. And then, once more, she was torn with sorrow for him: he was so very unhappy!

There were also moments when she heard something like an echo, not of her former love, but of a desire for some love; the desire to know that feeling once again, to plunge into it, to commit all her life to that great and mighty billow, to be carried away by it—and so put an end to the tortures of solitude, suspense, and unavailing struggles, helped by no one but herself!

It happened that one day Nina, in a long and confidential talk, wormed out of her the secret she had kept so jealously. At the discovery, she cried: "Why, then, suffer so much? Why not part—and at once?"

"Out of the question. How could I leave Father? The very news of our rupture might kill him."

"But where you do not love, you will certainly never marry."

"The less said of this, the better. I cannot marry him; I should ruin his whole career. In order to carry out his plans, he must marry a rich girl—to get what he craves above all things—success. I cannot be a stumbling-block for him—and I will not."

"Do you love him still?"

"I cannot tell. At times I do; at others I hate him; and I always feel dreadfully sorry he is so unhappy on my account. But I somehow feel that he will never be happy."

"Such a state of things cannot last."

"Ah, life! Life is so hard a thing to bear! A year ago, and even so late as last spring, I was so happy! And where is that happiness now?" she moaned.

Nina tried to comfort her. She did not listen, but sat looking out of the window at a world dingy and snowed over with smuts from the factory smoke. The bare skeletons of the trees tossing in the wind bent forward, as it were, full of compassion, and ready to rescue her.

"What is love? That love which should last eternally, and unite two souls for ever—what is it? Of what does it consist? Of delusions—mists that any breath of air can dispel.—Did I not love? I thought I did, and believed with all my heart that I had given myself up to it for ever. Where is that great love of mine?"

"It is in this complaint," said Nina.

"What has become of it? It's slain by the certainty that I am not loved. And yet, on the contrary, a great, a true love, as I understand it, is nourished by betrayal, and feeds on its sufferings and the blood it sheds! No, what I have taken for love cannot have been that true love. I am no doubt incapable of feeling anything of the sort," she concluded in self-reproach, seeking in herself the cause of all the evil, and finding that she was alone to blame for all.

"Well, there's a sort of hothouse love," said Nina, "that perishes in the chilly air of everyday life. And there's a love, too, which, like the *amœba*, must wrap itself round the thing loved, and remain there so long as it can draw life from it. There is also love which is no more than a sound and has to be evoked, unable to exist in itself.—But do not blame yourself; you have done no wrong."

She said no more, for Travinski, who had just come in, was standing in the room, unwilling to interrupt the conversation.

"Are you staying at home this evening?"

"I only came to say I shall have to go out presently. It is Saturday, and we are to pass the evening together at Kurovski's."

"I have heard a good many strange things said of these meetings. What are you about there?"

"We drink and talk—talk about every possible subject. These evenings are devoted to telling the truth, telling it to each other, no matter how crude and how unpleasant that truth may be. Kurovski is our fogleman."

"Funny, isn't it? that you want to hear the truth told about you by others, when you can tell it to yourselves, and, however severe the judgment is, there is no danger of being wounded by oneself."

"Funny, but a fact. We both speak the truth and hear it spoken."

"That only shows that the whirl of factory life, business, and money-making, cannot suffice for a man of culture. He must from time to time enjoy a cold bath of self-introspection, be it only of the world of his dreams."

"Quite right. Why, even Kessler comes amongst us, to reveal his abominable self, and to outrage us with impunity! Not daring to do that elsewhere, he avails himself of so good an opportunity."

"Any man known for what he is can as easily show off for evil as for good."

CHAPTER XVIII



HAVE to step round to the factory for a minute, and shall then go with you. Don't care to go home," Kessler said to Moritz.

"Have tea with me then?"

"All right. I feel out of sorts. Something's wrong with me—don't know what," he said, with a shuddering intake of the breath.

They walked leisurely along the empty, deserted streets. A snow-fall had sprinkled the roofs with white, and spread a thin frozen surface over streets and side-walks. A dull greyness, just visible in the wan glimmer of a wintry night, wrapped the town in its dusky folds. The street lamps had been already put out, and every object was blurred and merging one into the other; here and there a feeble light was struck, but went out immediately.

"Must you go to the factory?"

"I have to: all the sections are doing night-work."

"I don't want to interfere—but if I were you, I should not look in to that Malinovski fellow. He has all the air of a mad dog chained up."

"A fool! His daughter costs me five thousand roubles a year; and he growls at me!"

"He was an exile once in Siberia!"

"That'll have quieted him.—But I must go and see him. He has written me a letter, and I mean to answer it in person." He grinned an ugly grin.

"About Sophy?"

"Yes."

"Have you got a revolver, at least?"

"I've got my foot upon that Polish hound, and if he snarls, I'll crush him. But, take my word for it, he'll not

snarl, never fear. All he wants is compensation for his daughter's loss. It's not the first time I have settled an affair of the kind," he added, with a sneer. Yet he felt within him something that moved him strangely. It was not dread—that had always been an unmeaning word to him. It was rather a vague and wearisome sense of craving.

He looked up at the leaden sky, and down at the dead, gloomy rows of house-lined gullies, like trenches; and he lent an ear to the odd disquieting stillness of the sleeping town.

But once within the precincts of his own establishment, all the machinery of which was roaring loud; once in his own yard, with the familiar electric light, he felt at ease again.

"Just wait here a bit: I shall talk to him and be back in a minute."

He entered the great turret. Within, it was almost in absolute darkness. Only one single oil-lamp, hung up against the sooty wall, cast a faint light on the pistons as they worked to and fro, and on the under part of the big driving-wheel, as usual revolving with fearful speed, howling its savage hymn to force, and glittering ominously, with huge spokes of steel flying round.

"Malinovski!" he cried from the doorway; but the machinery, shouting as with iron jaws, drowned his voice in its terrific din.

Malinovski, bending forward, in a long blouse and holding in one hand an oil-can and in the other a cleaning-rag, was in attendance on the machine, watching over the monster. Swallowed up as he was in the chaos of discordant sounds and noises, he could only follow the huge thing's movements with his eyes, while it whirled and whirled as in mad, drunken fury, and shook the solid walls with its terrific strength.

"Malinovski!" Kessler screamed again, this time close to his ear.

He heard and came near, laying down his lamp and oil-can, and, looking calmly into Kessler's face, he wiped his hands upon his blouse.

"Did you write to me?" Kessler demanded fiercely.

The reply was a nod.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped, made furious by the old man's calm.

"What have you done to Sophy?" he said, stooping forward.

"Ha! so it's that?—Good; how much am I to pay?" he asked, instinctively backing towards the door.

"Nothing; it's I who'll pay you!" Malinovski answered composedly, blocking the way.

A steely flash shot from his eyes; his sinewy hands, powerful as the pistons of an engine, were clenched hard and threateningly.

"Out of my way, or I smash your skull!"

"If you can—if you can!" Malinovski muttered darkly.

Both moved forward, glaring and crouching, like tigers making ready to spring; their eyes sparkled like the steel-blue scintillations thrown off by the huge wheel—the monster's bright fangs, as it were, bared amid the shadows. The enormous wheel, like some reptile caught in a net of shadows mingled with darting lights, was howling wildly all the time, writhing and struggling as if to free itself from the prison of those thick-ribbed though quivering walls.

"Out of my way!" Kessler shrieked, as he dealt Malinovski such a blow from the heavy knuckle-duster arming his fist that the veteran staggered back to the wall. Instead of collapsing, however, he rebounded from it headlong and flew straight at Kessler, seized him by the throat in a grip of iron, and hurled him against the opposite wall with the same impact.

"Thou carrion, thou!" he bellowed, straining at Kessler's throat with all his strength, till Kessler vomited blood, and spluttered brokenly:

"Let go—let go——"

"When I've finished you off!—You are mine—mine—mine!" he whispered slowly, but heedlessly relaxing his grasp as he spoke, and thus giving Kessler a moment of respite.

Coming to himself, he darted forwards with a frantic,

desperate onset, and they both fell together. But Malinovski would not let go. Each held to the other; they hugged like two bears fighting for the mastery; they both rolled over and over with stifled cries of rage; their heads were beaten upon the asphalt floor, their bodies bruised against the walls around; one man's knees were thrust deep into the other's flesh, and they bit each other's faces and arms, screaming with pain and fury.

Both of them maddened by mutual hatred, both of them craving for the other's life-blood, they rolled together in dreadful union—a couple that fell down, rose up, fell again, and writhed about, tugging, straining, shrieking, covered with blood, demented with rage, whirling to and fro in mortal conflict beside the machine, with its deafening roar, and close to that huge wheel, all but seizing them every now and then in its annihilating grasp.

The struggle was short; Malinovski got the upper hand, and hugged his enemy with such resistless strength that his ribs and breastbone gave way. But Kessler, in a final effort, seized the other's throat between his teeth.

They rose together from the floor, staggered round and round each other, and, uttering a horrible cry, stumbled on to the pistons at work, and at once fell between the driving-wheel spokes, which revolved with the speed of lightning. In an instant they were seized, crumpled up, hurled to the ceiling, and crushed into strips and rags of bleeding flesh.

Their death-shriek was still resounding within the turret walls when they were no more; all that remained of them was the torn fragments of their limbs, that still went round with the wheel, describing a horrible orbit, or flew off against the walls, or fell on the pistons, befouling them with gore; while the huge wheel, crimsoned all over, and portentous in its awful strength, ran on as madly as ever, screaming as if possessed by some demon.

Few people followed Malinovski's funeral: only some near acquaintances and relatives of his son Adam. It was indeed fearful weather that day; flaws of rain and sleet again and

again swept the town, and most piercing blasts blew from the dark-grey clouds, floating heavily above the ground.

Adam followed the coffin with his mother, almost beside herself, her face swollen with crying. Behind them walked the Yaskulskis, with their elder children, and some of the neighbours and relatives. They went down the middle of the street, behind a one-horse carriage bearing the coffin, whose wheels, splashing in the ruts, sent thin black mud flying about in streams.

The train crept slowly down Piotrovskia Street, crowded with wagons and private conveyances. Bespattered foot-passengers thronged the side-walks, jets of water spouted from the roofs, pouring over the pavements and the umbrellas, tossed to and fro by the wind; and the falling sleet went on whitening both the coffin and the carriage that bore it.

At the side of the street, and accompanying the coffin, walked the whole band of musicians, with Blumenfeld and Shulc at their head. Among them, but in the last ranks, was Stanley Vilchek, walking and talking about his business enterprises to some young fellow or other.

Horn stepped slowly along behind the mourners, glancing at everybody with eyes full of sorrow. It was Sophy whom he hoped to see. But she was not present, and no one knew what had become of her since Kessler's death.

When they got out of town, about twenty workwomen joined them, and struck up a wailing dirge, which they chanted quite by themselves, for not a single priest was there. Malinovski, as one reputed guilty both of murder and of suicide, was to be buried thus in token of abhorrence of his end. Perhaps that was why such dark and bitter faces were to be seen there.

But as they went on farther out of town, there flocked to the funeral a large number of men from the alleys and slums thereabout. They came, still unbreathed from their labours, begrimed, blue with cold, and massed themselves in a serried band around their departed companion. And a formidable host they looked.

The wailing chant resounded, the wind and rain came down, the frost was penetrating and pitiless. Along the avenue that led to the cemetery, the naked trees moaned, tossing in the blast, and the voices of those that chanted rose like sobs, telling of boundless sorrow. Through the cemetery, with its rotting leaves and drifting snow, its splendid family-vaults and bare trees rustling dismally, the mourners passed at a quick pace, and turned off to the "Corner of the Forgotten Ones," where hardly a score of graves were to be seen, overgrown with withered thistles and torchweeds.

The grave had been dug, and in a moment the yellow clods of frozen earth were rattling upon the coffin. A tempest of weeping and of lamentations followed, accompanied by the prayers which the workmen said in a loud voice, kneeling round the tomb.

On a sudden the wind ceased, the trees were hushed, the sky grew very dark, and big snow-flakes came down from the lowering clouds, settling like ponderous white butterflies, throwing a bright mantle over graves and men, and covering all with one great chilly sheet. Through the falling snow, they could hear afar the sirens in Lodz announcing the workmen's afternoon recess.

"What will become of Sophy?" Blumenfeld inquired of Vilchek as they were returning.

"She'll take to the street. When she heard about Kessler, she flew into a violent passion, and reviled her father, who had forced her to seek another protector. But Wilhelm Müller, I think, will take his place in no time."

"And what are you doing now, Vilchek?" Horn asked, joining the two.

"I am on the look-out for another stroke of business. I've done with Grosplik, and don't care to deal in coal any more."

"I suppose you have sold your building-plot to Grünspan?"

"I have!" he growled, and set his teeth, as though wincing at some painful experience.

"Ah, has he swindled you?"

"That he has!" he hissed through his clenched teeth, with an odd mingling of satisfaction and annoyance. "I sold it him for forty thousand, and gained thirty-eight thousand five hundred by the transaction; but I've been swindled all the same.—Never, never will I forgive him!"

He pulled up the collar of his fur coat, as if to hide the shame that crimsoned his face, as well as to protect it from the driving snow, which now came down more heavily.

"I don't quite make you out. If you have made so enormous a profit, how can you have been swindled?"

"Like this. You see, when the contract was signed, and the money already in my pocket, that scurvy whelp put out his hand to thank me for my great kindness! I was a very shrewd fellow, he said, but only so far as forty thousand roubles went! Then he laughed, and said he would have given fifty thousand, for the land was necessary to him—absolutely.—Think of it: I have been trapped like a dolt, and now they are all laughing at me."

It was not so much the money he cared for as the fact that Grünspan had taken him in and was now jeering at him. This was a sore blow to his vanity, and the thought gave him grinding torments. He quitted his companions abruptly, not being then in a mood to speak with anyone, and, taking a droshky, drove home.

This was still the same tumble-down hovel, which he had rented till the next spring. It was cold, damp, and desolate; so he only stayed there till night fell. He then walked over to the Colony, where he now boarded, being anxious to get into what he called "society."

But that day—as very rare exception—the company were in a far from lively mood. Kama in particular would burst into tears every now and then, and go and shut herself up in the parlour; the sight of Adam Malinowski cut her to the heart. Having taken his mother home and left her in the care of some near relations, he had wandered aimlessly about Lodz for some time. At last, when quite worn out, he had drifted to the Colony to take tea there as usual, hoping

to feel more at his ease in the midst of friends who understood him well. With a far-off look in his sea-green eyes, he was now sitting at the table, but those eyes seemed somehow darkened by the mental vision of his father's last instant, stamped and branded in his brain. He said nothing, but feeling that so many a friendly heart was full of compassion for him there, that so many eyes were directed towards him with the deepest sympathy, and noticing the subdued tones in which they spoke, the unusual demeanour of them all, and Kama's frequent bursts of sobbing and exits, he soon felt it was too much for him. He rushed out without leave-taking, and, once in the corridor, broke down in a tempest of weeping.

Horn and Vilchek followed, calmed him as best they could, and accompanied him to his home, where he found a good many friends assembled.

For a considerable time they sat with him in dead silence. At length Blumenfeld began to play one of Chopin's Nocturnes, very, very softly. He played a long time, and with such deep expression that Adam listened, and by degrees grew somewhat calmer.

Later, David Halpern too dropped in, and did all he could to console him, speaking with the liveliest faith of the justice and the goodness of God. Everyone was willing enough to listen, with the exception of Vilchek. As for him, he took no interest whatever in that sort of thing, possessed as he had been for the last fortnight with devouring hatred for Grünspan.

He would prowl about Lodz for days together, absorbed in the search for ways and means to injure his enemy. He had sworn to be revenged on him, and was only awaiting an opportunity for his revenge. Personal vengeance was not what he hankered after. To cudgel, even to kill Grünspan was nonsensical. It was Grünspan's purse that he would aim at. For many a day, and with the most careful investigation, he had been looking into all the particulars of the fire at Grosman's, convinced that he would thereby manage to strike at Grünspan's most vital interests.

He was in a fair way to discover everything; but meanwhile, as a foretaste of vengeance, he made up his mind to let Boroviecki know all about Grosplik's conspiracy against him, and Moritz's machinations to get the management of the factory into his own hands.

One day therefore, having dressed himself up with extreme elegance, he called upon old Mr. Adam and Anne, expecting to meet Charles there as well. Anne received him very kindly—he reminded her of old days in Kurov!—and took him in to see Mr. Adam.

"Why, Stanley! How are you getting on, my boy? I'm glad you've come, very glad," and the old man held out his hand, which Vilchek kissed mechanically—a survival from days long past. As he proceeded to tell them about Kurov, where he had lately been, Anne came near and listened attentively.

"Well, and how is the world treating you, eh?" the old man asked after a time.

"Oh, pretty well. Pretty well for a beginning," he answered carelessly, and said a few words about his forty thousand roubles, thinking to impress them exceedingly.

"Well, well, God's blessing upon you, my lad. May you become a millionaire some day, provided you never wrong your neighbour!"

Vilchek's lips curled in a pitying smile, and he set to explain his plans and intentions at great length, throwing thousands of roubles right and left, telling of his dislike for the millionaires he had dealings with, sketching his future in bold strokes, and at the same time making himself very ridiculous by his continual boasts.

Anne looked amused, and old Mr. Boroviecki exclaimed with surprise: "How curiously things go for us all in this world of ours! Do you remember, Stanley, my boy, how you used to drive my calves to the meadows? And Father Simon's hard cudgel—his long pipe-stem? Do you remember it?"

"It's hard enough to forget," Stanley replied, colouring up, for Anne had her eye curiously fixed upon him.

"Tell me, now, about that old Jewess. Did you or didn't

you eat up her sabbath cakes?" the old man went on mercilessly, his reminiscences waking up.

But Vilchek was so much annoyed by them that he made no reply, finished his tea, and walked off, furious with old Mr. Adam and with all the world.

"Shall my days of childhood always be a rope round my neck?" he snarled as he went away.

Mr. Adam spoke to Anne about him for a long time. He could not make out how things were going on in these days. How such a fellow as Vilchek, for instance, who once had tended their cattle, and whom he himself had often thrashed soundly, was now a man of wealth and came to visit them and behave as their equal. In spite of his democratic ideas the old gentleman found this beyond his comprehension. Or, rather, such a notion of equality was by no means to his liking, for he wound up by saying to Anne: "These people are going on too fast. The Lord was satisfied when the nobles were predominant. With these new men coming to the front, I fancy no one can be pleased but the Devil. What do you think, dear?"

CHAPTER XIX



OROVIECKI was in Berlin. He had gone to visit Lucy, who had sent him telegrams without number, threatening to take her life unless he came for some hours at least. He had been rather pleased to go, expecting to get a few days' rest away from the factory, now in full swing. Indeed, he was excessively fatigued, and quite worn out with work and worry.

Lucy he saw twice a day. Each meeting was a torment to him, especially as she had by now lost all her good looks; and her altered figure and swollen face inspired him with profound dislike, almost with loathing.

She, on her side, was not slow to perceive the impression she now made, and every appointment ended on her part in tears and bitter reproaches.

Each of them was, in fact, a torture to the other. She was as much attached to him as ever, but now she was no more the exquisitely passionate lover that she had once been, that Lucy, full of unconscious delicacy, unaffected artlessness, and touching simplicity, Lucy the beautiful, the pride of Lodz; in her place had sprung up a common, vulgar, ill-bred Jewess, of the type met with in little country towns, noisy, insolent, shallow-brained. Her coming motherhood had deformed her and brought out all the worst peculiarities of her race.

This change in her dismayed him; but knowing what wrong he had done her, he tried his best to conceal the dislike and antipathy she aroused, and bore quietly enough with her whims and outbursts of temper. At every meeting she would upbraid him, taking delight in torturing both herself and him; declaring that the child about to be born was his, tormenting him with her continual fears of approaching

death—and ending by flinging herself into his arms with the fiercest transports of gross sensuality.

It was not long before he left her completely, his self-control and patience being near the breaking-point. But he did not leave Berlin so soon. He stayed on to take a little rest at last, spending his days and nights in empty, senseless amusements.

After coming back one morning early, he was awakened late in the afternoon by a messenger from the telegraph office. Opening his eyes, heavy and dull with sleep, he saw the words:

“Come back—factory on fire—Moritz.”

Leaping from his bed, he dressed in the twinkling of an eye, set to drinking his tea, which had long grown cold, and looked, as in a daze, out of the window at the houses opposite. Some time passed before he noticed that a crumpled paper was clenched in his hand. He straightened it out and read the words once more.

“The factory on fire!” he cried in amazement and terror, and rushed into the corridor as if to give the alarm. He had got as far as the lift before he recovered his senses and his self-control.

He ordered a special train, and till it was ready, waited in a small restaurant close to the station, with thoughts of terror flashing through his mind. What he drank or did or said just then, he never knew; his whole being was away at his burning factory.

He was told the train was waiting. He understood, for he went to board it. But when asked a question, he also understood, but could make no answer; the one thought—that his factory was on fire—excluded every other.

The train, consisting only of the engine, its tender, and one carriage, rushed at once out of the station, like a thorough-bred touched with the spur, and went off steaming at full speed into the snow-covered plain. Stations, towns, hills, rivers, forests, flashed past with kaleidoscopic swiftness, made visible like shadows, and like shadows fading into the night.

At a station where they had to stop, he wired to Moritz, asking for news of the fire to be sent on to him. Off they went again. There were, so to speak, no halts. The train, like some wild beast, dashed ever forward, with blood-red eyes, devouring space and vomiting millions of golden sparks; with its pistons beating time in a mighty rhythm, and its wheels speeding over the rails as they thundered their roaring song, it ploughed its way through the darkness, sweeping on—on—on.

Boroviecki stood looking into the night, his face against the window-pane: saw the blurred, trembling outlines of things flitting by; saw the snowy plain receding rapidly. It was now late at night. He shaded the lamp and laid himself down. But there was no sleep for him. Ever and anon his brain was swept by tempests of fear—scattered fragments of pictures, all the more frightful because he could in no way seize their outlines, nor hold their transient forms in his mind; each vanished instantly, and, vanishing, left his mind in prey to the direst horror.

Once he started to his feet, uncovered the lamp, and, exerting his will-power to the utmost, began to draw up in his note-book an account of all his assets and liabilities. But he could not go on, so terrified he felt at the very thought of learning the true state of his affairs. The insurance money could, he was sure, do no more than cover his own debts, his partners' shares, and Anne's contribution. But the capital he had sunk in the concern, and the money value of his work done, and the promises for work in the future—they would be nowhere.

He wanted not to think of all this, but the more he tried, the less he succeeded. Those figures, of evil significance, were fixed too deep in his brain, and came out too clearly on his retina. "What's to be done?" he thought, but only at times; connected thinking was at present beyond him. He could not spin the fibres of his thoughts into a thread; they fell asunder, scattered and broken by his delirious impatience.

Again he looked out into the night, cursing the train for travelling so slowly. His feverish imagination had flown on

a hundred times faster: he was already in Lodz, seeing the far-off glow and then the flames, and all the work he had done perishing in them, and hearing the thunderous crash of the falling walls. The fire in Lodz was devouring his very soul.

Then he would start to his feet, pace up and down the carriage, hurtle against the partitions, and—a sense as of intoxication coming over him—lie down again and stare at the lamp till he felt himself as one with the train—with the rumbling wheels, with the engine's pantings, its labourings and strivings; and he took a furious delight in rushing thus headlong through the night and the empty snow-covered fields.

But oh! how slowly, how very slowly the hours crept by! He pulled the window down and put his head out into the frosty night air. There was a keen, bleak wind blowing over the snowy fields and into his burning face; and the dark expanse, feebly lit up by the bright patches of snow, filled his mind with the dreariest gloom and dejection.

Meanwhile the train rushed on like a roaring thunderbolt. Slumbering stations, snow-covered hamlets, forests bending beneath their snowy burdens, long lines of railway lights—bright bubbles floating in a sea of darkness—all was travelling backward with impetuous speed, as if fleeing in terror from the giant's charge.

Charles felt himself more than unwell, and so broken down that he could hardly stand; sore at heart, sore in every muscle, each thought that passed through his brain burning like a prod with a red-hot knife. Still he tramped on stubbornly from window to window, sat down on one seat after another; then, starting up with a jerk, went again to look out into the frosty winter night and the dark impenetrable space before him. As station after station flew past, he glanced at them with a throbbing heart to make sure of the names he was expecting, but could barely distinguish in the gloom. The suspense which tortured him never ceased from driving its keen dart into every nerve, every centre of thought, racking him with unspeakable agony.

Wearied out at last, he fell into a sort of drowse, from which he would start up, his brow bathed in the sweat of fear, and his heart sick with the sense of his utter helplessness. Fatigue mastered him; he no longer knew clearly where he was, nor what had come to pass. As in a dream, he watched the coming of the pale wintry dawn, with its wan grey face looking in at the window, slumberously crawling over the snows, sweeping the darkness from the fields, mingling with the lights of the awaking villages, unveiling the outlines of the forests, wrapping itself up in the folds of the dusky clouds rapidly moving forward from the east, and then hiding itself in an enormous grey cloak and shaking the snow down from it in great flakes that obscured all the landscape.

Struggling to get over his exhaustion, he washed, and then made a desperate attempt to get his unstrung nerves under full control. To a certain extent he succeeded, at least in so far as external appearances went. He forced himself to be outwardly calm, and to think connectedly, but was unable to overcome his restlessness and impatience, which increased as the train drew near Lodz.

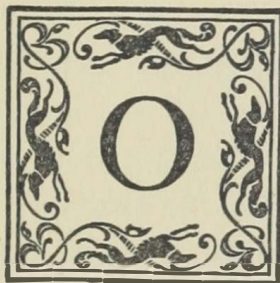
He looked back at the past with the bitterest disappointment. So many years of hard work, such high hopes, such strenuous efforts, such intense yearnings for success—all these he saw flying away in clouds of smoke! His anguish was all the greater because he could do nothing whatever, and because of his futile revolt against destiny, his most malignant foe.

The snow was coming down still thicker than before, and though it was now broad day, nothing of the outside world was to be seen. The train thundered on at the very top of its speed, tearing and rending, as it were, the white shroud drifting over the land. Boroviecki, leaning out of the window, and drawing breaths of frozen air into his parched mouth, was presently able to discern the outlines of many a factory through the curtain of snow; and this flooded him with such raging impatience that he bit his fingers hard, to repress the scream that was rising to his lips.

The engine, as if it shared his feelings, went forward, seem-

ingly driven by a madman; with fierce concentrated energy, with snorting and shrieking, with pistons screaming aloud, it flew like a huge droning beetle over the whitening plains, as if it would fly on for ever.

CHAPTER XX



ON the evening before that very day, Anne was sitting as usual with old Mr. Borowiecki, who was more nervous and weary than usual, always asking about Charles, and complaining of want of breath and of a sharp pain at his heart. The day had been sombre, and snow had fallen more than once; but it ceased before eventide, though the gale increased then and whistled about the veranda, on which the sick man's windows opened. It abated, however, when twilight came, and there followed a deep stillness, in which the sounds of the factory were plainly audible.

"When is Charles coming back?" he whispered faintly.

"I cannot tell," was her reply, as she paced the room and looked out of the window.

She had a sensation of extraordinary lassitude, together with tedium and depression, that had come to her when that grim leaden night cast its shadows over Lodz. For weeks she had not been from home, always tending the sick man, and restlessly looking forward to some way or other out of all her troubles.

Just then, whilst walking about the room, now in shadow, and always impregnated with the odour of some drug for the old man, the thought came to her that she was doomed to drag out her existence thus without end, and to remain everlastingly in the same state of suspense. She did not rebel against what had to be, she submitted to her fate without reserve; but in her soul she felt that sadness, the deepest of all, the sadness of resignation.

Old Mr. Adam had begun to say his evening prayers, but she did not join him to say them, for her mind was away.

A feeling of torpor had taken possession of her, whilst gazing into the garden at the falling snow and the factory walls beyond.

From the garden gate, opening on the factory yard, a man came running as fast as he could, and entered the veranda shouting. Anne went out to meet him. It was Soha, and he uttered one word—one only: "Fire!"

"Where?" She closed the door for the old man not to hear.

"At the factory. It broke out in the drying-room, on the third floor."

She questioned him no further, but ran out to the factory on the spur of the moment. From the wicket-gate she could see the flames putting forth their crimson heads out of the third-floor windows. In the yard there was a tumult not to be described. Men were pouring out of the pavilions, uttering loud cries; window-panes were breaking, and clouds of pungent black smoke came out of them, with fiery tongues that licked the window-frames and climbed up toward the roofs.

"Father!" she cried, remembering him with a thrill of terror, and ran back to the house.

"What is it, Anne?" the old man said in alarm.

"Nothing, nothing.—There seems to have been an accident at Travinski's mills," she answered hastily, as she lit the lamps herself, and let down the blinds with hands that trembled.

"Miss Anne—for God's sake—mercy on us!" the maid-servant screamed, rushing in.

"Be silent!" Anne commanded. "Light the lamp, it's too dark here."

"But—but the lamp is lit already!"

"So it is. Very good. Now go; I'll call you presently."

The dull, confused sounds of the conflagration were now rising louder and louder, and to such an extent that they could be heard through closed windows and doors.

"What shall I do, what shall I do?" Anne exclaimed, utterly lost. How could she find means for the noise not to reach the old man's ears?

"Anne, ask Max in to tea with us."

"All right. I am writing to him this instant."

She hurried to the writing-desk, moved some chairs noisily, slammed several drawers, knocked over a vase first, and then a heavy box full of papers, and in picking them up again managed to upset some chairs. Then she shut the door with a bang.

"What's the matter with you to-night, Anne?" the sick man grumbled, listening attentively, and not without apprehension; for though slightly deaf, he could hear a strange clamour that reached his room.

"I am so clumsy, so dreadfully clumsy—even Charles has told me I am," she said in excuse, and burst out into a long peal of meaningless laughter.

She passed into the next room to take a look at the factory. But she could not repress a shriek at what she saw: a great wave of fire, towering high above the factory roof, and still rising higher and more terrible.

"What's that, Anne?" the old man cried, on hearing her shriek.

"Nothing, Father, nothing. I only hit my head against the door," she rejoined, with both hands to her head so as to conceal her confusion, and gain time to repress her dismay. She was still shuddering from the sight, and felt so weak that she could not stand.

The fire-brigade, with twanging trumpet-calls, passed at full gallop down the street.

"And that, Anne, what may it be?"

"Oh," she replied, "only some carts driven faster than usual."

"But there was music, I thought."

"No; merely sleigh-bells tinkling past." She turned the talk by adding: "Shall I read to you a little, Father?"

He nodded assent.

By a more than human effort she silenced the tempest within herself, and began to read in a very loud voice.

"I can hear you, Anne, I can!" the old man remarked pettishly.

To this she paid no heed, but went on as before.

What it was she read, Anne did not know, nor could she make out a single line, a single word; her fevered brain made up sentences; her whole mind was tossed in the storm of clamours, resounding crashes, and reverberations from the burning pile. The blood-red light shed by the fire was now visible upon the blinds, in spite of the lamp in the room. And still she went on reading, though she sometimes came to a momentary standstill, as an unspeakable dread took possession of her mind. A clammy sweat, caused by her strivings, covered her wan face, now changed into a mask of terror. The wild look in her eyes was hidden under her knitted brows. At times her voice would change and break; there was a pain at her heart so crushing, so suffocating, that she was almost mad with it. Yet she still kept herself in hand.

And now the noises outside reached the room more distinctly; the thunder of ceilings falling, the rattle of crumbling walls, shook the house every now and then.

"Have mercy, O Lord! Say Thou: 'Peace, be still!'" she prayed silently, invoking that Name, and beseeching Him with all her heart to take pity on them.

The old man no longer listened to her reading, but to the din outside. He began to be afraid, with increasing fear.

"I hear shrieks—in Charles's factory most likely!—Anne! see what it is."

She went, and saw what it was. Entering the other room, she beheld the whole factory one sheet of flame, and the huge conflagration spreading tempestuously to all the pavilions, with pillars of fire uprising to the sky.

"Nothing, Father, nothing! Only the wind shrieking. It blows very hard—quite a hurricane." But it was only with a tremendous endeavour that she was able to say the words.

She could not breathe. Despair, impotency, fright, were all clutching at her throat. She knew well that the fire must end the old man's life.

"And what can I do?—Why is Charles away?—And what if our house takes fire too?" The thought shot like lightning through her brain, hypnotized her with terror, paralysed her

completely. She could not, no, she could not read any more.

Walking to and fro in the room, and stumbling now and then, she brought the samovar-stand and put it in its place.

"It's the wind.—Father, do you recollect the great gale we had once in Kurov? Our poplar avenue was all ruined by that storm.—Dear, how frightened I was then! It was just like now—the same horrible whistling; the same crashing and groaning of the trees as they fell—and the horrible howling of the storm—— Good God, how terrible it was—and is!"

She said no more, the words died away on her lips; she stood for an instant motionless, half dead with fear, as she listened to the mighty, roaring flames.

"Out there something is wrong," the sick man said, making an attempt to raise himself up.

At once she came to herself, assured him that all was well, and went into the parlour. There, putting forth all her strength to the utmost, she pushed the piano over to the open door, and set to playing a wild, furious gallopade. The merry notes, full of mad gaiety, filled the dwelling; the measures were struck off with such power, such brilliancy, such peals of laughter and vertiginous fantasy, that they succeeded in drowning the noise of the conflagration, and brought old Boroviecki, not only to his former tranquillity, but to something like gaiety as well.

She continued to play, with still greater fury. A string would snap now and then with a dolorous twang, but she paid no heed. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, yet she did not know she was weeping. She knew nothing, understood nothing, but played on recklessly to save Father's life.

On a sudden, the whole house shook with a most violent explosion, as if half the world had been blown to pieces; the pictures fell down from the walls. Mr. Adam started up, rushed to the window, pulled up the blind—and the glare of the conflagration burst in upon him and filled the room.

"The factory! Charles, O Charles!" he cried, and fell on his back upon the floor, catching at his throat with a spas-

modic quiver; his legs twitched convulsively, his stiffening fingers tore at the blanket which was round him, and he uttered a strangled gurgle.

Anne ran to help him, called for the servants, rang for them. No one was in. She tried to bring him to, but in vain; he gave no sign of life. She rushed frantically from the house, crying out for aid.

Some people came presently, along with Dr. Vysocki, who had come to give first aid to the injured workmen; but it was too late; the old man had passed away, and Anne lay beside him, senseless on the floor.

The detonation which had killed him by revealing the fact that the factory was on fire had been caused by the explosion of a boiler, which flew high in the air, carrying with it part of a pavilion. Describing a long parabola, it came down like a burning meteor on the front pavilion of old Baum's factory. Crashing through the roof and the second and first floors, it fell upon the ground-floor, littered with fragments of the building, which now also began to take fire.

After the boiler had exploded, the fire at Boroviecki's made yet more terrible progress. Through the aperture made in the walls, as through a deep wound, torrents of fire and smoke issued forth, seizing everything with tempestuous fury in their hot embrace.

The fire-brigade did its very utmost. Nevertheless, and in spite of all, one pavilion after another took fire; like a thing endowed with life, the flame crept up the walls, climbed to the roofs, and darted its blood-red streaks across the yard, till it formed one great torrent that rolled all over the factory in mighty, fiery waves.

The terror of this spectacle was enhanced by the thick blackness of the night and the violence of the gale, which fanned the flames and blew them in every direction in dishevelled filaments of fire. Each time a roof fell in, there uprose red columns of glowing dust, and a dazzling rain of fire came pouring down from on high in the murky night over the neighbouring roofs. The yard was filled with volumes of acrid smoke, that hid the walls like a coal-black

fog, in which there were dimly seen fiery serpents, hissing and writhing, monstrous red shapes pursuing one another, and weird heads of flame with flying, portentous hair.

Storey after storey gave way; their contents, burning furiously, fell into the sea of fire; wall after wall burst asunder, crumbling to heaps of ruins. The fire was now master there; for the men had withdrawn, in order to protect Travinski's works hard by, and to put out the fire which had sprung up in Baum's factory.

Moritz, husky with shouting, and all in perspiration, was still running feverishly hither and thither; but in that hubbub of savage cries no one could hear him. And, in the close yard, from which the remains of the scaffolding had not yet been removed, the heat was unbearable.

The fire was on every side, loud-sounding as a sea in in a storm. At times there would come a lull, and then again it would raise its awful head, shaking it with a howl as of hideous joy; while burning stuffs, masses of yarn on fire, and torn rags of flaming tissues would fly up from the depths and hover in the air like noisy birds of ill omen.

Such was the violence of the conflagration that the men stood staring at it in complete bewilderment; helpless, dazed. They shrank away from it, and were terrified exceedingly; but the cries of horror which burst from every mouth were inaudible in the chaotic din of sounds and crashes, the dreary clanking of machines hurtling down, together with the chambers that contained them, and the noise of walls that fell; all these forming a chorus to the Corybantic minstrelsy of the fire itself. The conflagration shouted its triumphant anthem, waving its red banners in the pitch-black Cimmerian darkness; it rolled in frenzy all over the ruined buildings, and yelled and shrieked, and danced, and bit at the walls with gory fangs, tearing the machinery to pieces, licking up the molten iron, consuming everything, destroying everything, and trampling over the ruins it had made.

Towards day-break, when the snow began to fall very heavily, the fire had burnt itself out. Only the bare walls remained standing, roofless, floorless, windowless—a naked

skeleton with charred and crumbling bones: a huge four-square building, like a chest pierced with many a hole, and emitting smoke at every aperture, within which some remnants of the fire were still crawling about like devil-fishes whose blood-red tentacles sucked at the dead body of the factory.

The morning was grey and dismal, with snow falling in thick flakes, when Boroviecki arrived. Jumping out of his cab, he rushed straight into the yard. Standing there amongst the heaps of wreckage and the smoking timbers, on which jets of water were playing, he slowly took in the whole extent of the disaster: the piles of half-consumed rubbish, and the rent walls, as crumbly as burnt rags, now become the graveyard of all his labours and hopes. All this he eyed with a long and tranquil gaze.

Not a muscle quivered, not a nerve thrilled. All the excitement and uncertainty and apprehension that had preyed so upon him during the journey had vanished in presence of the reality before him; and he looked this reality straight in the face, growing to outward appearance sterner and colder as he gazed, while within him his heart swelled with animosity, resentment, and implacable revolt.

Moritz came to him, along with a good many others. He met them all with frigid unconcern, and heard what they had to say about the cause and the spread of the fire. He asked no questions, but passed into his office, which had been saved from the conflagration, as well as the storehouses for finished wares, though these were as good as empty.

Old Yaskulski, who had been injured in the fire, lay there moaning, with Vysocki in attendance on him.

Through the broken office window Charles once more surveyed the smoking ruins. Then he said to Moritz, in a subdued yet firm voice: "Well, what of this? We have to begin all over again."

"Yes, oh yes!—Ah, if you only knew what I have gone through! I am quite knocked up, and fear for my health. Do you know, I was in town and saw the fire-brigade passing by. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'let them take their time; why

hurry so?' Then someone said: 'It's at Boroviecki's!'—Off I drove, but when I got here, all the spinning department was on fire. Ah, what I have gone through, what I have gone through!"

He went on lamenting loudly, shamming despair and extreme affliction, but all the while keenly scanning the expression on Boroviecki's face.

The latter heard him talk until, tired with his ceaseless repetitions of the same refrain, he bent forward and whispered in his ear, very softly: "No humbug! This is all your work."

Moritz started back violently and cried: "Are you mad? Are you quite out of your mind?"

"I have spoken."

And he turned away to Matthew, who, all begrimed and in tears, was stammering something that Charles could not make out. He only understood that somebody had died.

"But who is it you are talking of? Don't mumble so," Charles exclaimed, losing patience.

"Our old master! Dear Lord!—I ran in, found master dead, and Miss Anne lying on the ground."

"Look here, you idiot! No foolery, or I'll smash your skull in!" Charles shouted, rushing at him.

Here Vysocki interfered. "Mr. Adam has died of aneurysm of the heart, probably occasioned by sudden fright. My dear fellow, you had better go and see Miss Anne; she too is half dead."

Thunderstruck to hear this, Boroviecki, whose affection for his father was extreme, ran out of the room as if he doubted the truth of Vysocki's statement. On the threshold of the door he met Anne, whom they were taking to the Travinskis'.

"Charles! Charles!" she gasped, seizing his hand; and a torrent of tears streamed down her hollow cheeks.

"Hush, do not cry. I shall rebuild the factory, and all will be right again."

"But Father—Father——" She could say no more, and fell into a fit of convulsive weeping.

"I shall come and see you in the afternoon," he said hastily, making a sign for the men to carry her away; that reminder of his father had clutched his heart with an iron grip.

He entered the room where the body lay, and stood there long, his eyes fixed on those features, so loving, so dignified—but now so changed! They had frozen into a look of unspeakable agony—the unuttered cry of the soul, which had distorted those traits so fearfully that Charles trembled with horror to see them.

Beside his father's corpse he now spent the most excruciating moments in all his life. He sat there for many an hour, plunged in depths of concentrated thought, unravelling the whole web of his past life, laying himself bare before himself, and contemplating his own naked soul. This contemplation indeed restored him to peace, to perfect peace; but at the same time it filled his heart with a sadness that remained with him ever after.

He lay down to sleep, and slept for a long, long time. When he awoke, his sober sense had got the upper hand. He resolved to return once again to the fight, and again to struggle with his fate.

At the very outset he met with an obstacle in his way. Moritz came and, with protestations of the most tender friendship, announced that he had to withdraw his share in the concern, together with all the moneys lent; and that he had already given notice at the insurance office to that effect.

"I quite understand," said Boroviecki; "you have done all you could to ruin me, and very cleverly it has been done! But do you think that you'll succeed? that I am down and done for?"

"You are out of your mind with grief, and do not know what grievous wrong you do me with your suspicions. If I withdraw, it's only because I cannot let my money lie locked up in a business that's dead. You can pull through without my help; and I have to live and do business with

my father-in-law, and am in sore need of money on the nail."

He then proceeded to speak in glowing language of the affairs which compelled him to take this step, defended himself with great warmth, and wound up by embracing him.

"Don't look at me so, Charles! I love you as a brother; I am most heartily grieved for your losses—so grieved that I should be glad to help you in any feasible way. And though I shall make nothing by this, I am ready to buy the ground where your factory stood, and all that is left of it. Oh, you know well what a tender heart mine is for all my friends!—You'd have ready cash—I could borrow it for you at once—and the wherewithal for a fresh start!"

On hearing this proposal Boroviecki indignantly threw the door wide open.

"This is my answer," he said. "All matters of business are to be transacted in my office."

"What! What!—This to me?—This for all my friendship, my devoted friendship?" Moritz shrieked.

"Out with you, or I'll have you turned out!" Charles cried, ringing for Matthew.

Moritz left, and Boroviecki sat down to balance his accounts, which took him a great deal of time. When he had done, he rose, white and very much shaken. The insurance money would go no further than to cover the biggest debts; and there were others, of less importance but in far greater numbers, which would completely swallow up all that his building-plot was worth, and so leave him absolutely destitute.

Once more he would have to accept a subordinate position, to serve a master, to become a mere wheel in some piece of industrial machinery, and to writhe for many a year in impotent desolation and barren dreams of independence; to lie in fetters and in prison, looking up through the gratings of his cell at the men who set up factories, start new movements, gather up millions, and live to the utmost extent of all their faculties and all their passions.

"No, no, no!" he muttered between his teeth, in dire revolt against such a future, which he looked at with scorn and contempt. He had already had enough of that sort of life, and would return to it at no price whatever. He set his wits to work strenuously to find a way out of the toils he was entangled in. Not for one instant did he dream of a possible surrender.

Max came to him the next day, very pale, with tear-swollen eyelids, and almost too worn out to stand. He at once told him simply that he too withdrew his share from the business, and had also notified the insurance-office people.

Boroviecki could bear no more. "So you too are deserting me, Max?" he said bitterly; and tears—the first tears he had ever shed—welled up to his eyes from the depths of a bleeding heart.

Suppressing these feelings, however, he proceeded to set before his friend the plan for a new factory, on which he enlarged, growing warmer by degrees, conquering all difficulties and making impossibilities possible. And for this second fight with destiny it was not Max's money that he wanted, but himself and his probity and efficiency. He entreated, he implored Max not to fall away from him.

"No, I can't do it. Don't be angry with me, don't take it ill; I simply cannot. You see, I put myself entirely into that factory, I loved it as my child, I lived with its life—and now it has vanished—all gone up in smoke! I should not have energy enough, no, nor faith enough, to do the same work over again. Do, pray, consider the state I am in, and forgive me. Farewell, Charles, I am ever your friend, and you can always count upon me; but from this day forth I must do things by myself. What I shall do I cannot tell as yet. So farewell, dear Charles!"

"Farewell, dear Max!"

And they parted, with sincere affection on either side. Boroviecki bore him no grudge, for Max's discouragement was plain enough to him; and besides, the workmen had related to him how, when the factory was found to be past

saving, he had locked himself up in his office and cried like a child over the ruin of his work.

"So, then, I am quite alone? Very well, then; very well." The words sounded like a challenge issued to the whole world.

He gave orders for his father's burial, but went himself to his wrecked factory, where the officials of the insurance company were already hard at work. Presently Matthew came to him with the announcement that Müller senior was at his house and waiting to see him.

As soon as they were together, the old manufacturer gave him a friendly hug, and said hurriedly: "I was in Sosnoviec—only got the news by wire to-day—that's the reason I'm late. Awfully sorry—the more so because I've seen how hard you worked.—And now what are you going to do?"

"Don't know yet."

"What!" Müller blurted out; "have you lost all?"

"Yes, all."

"That's no matter; I'll stand by you. You'll pay me at the usual rate of interest, and build a bigger factory than before! I'm fond of you; you're a man to my liking.—Well, what do you say?"

Charles steadily made objections to Müller's offer. He pointed out that there would be absolutely no security for the capital sunk, and depicted his present financial position in the darkest colours. But the other only laughed.

"Pooh, don't tell me! You have first-class brains—which are the very best capital in the world. What you've lost now, you'll get back again in a very few years. I was only a craftsman, a weaver, you know; I can't so much as write my name properly; yet now I've got a factory, and millions into the bargain. If you'll marry my girl Mada, you'll get the whole concern along with her; I have long wanted to tell you that. If not, I'll lend you the money all the same. My boy Will isn't cut out for a manufacturer; I shall have to buy him an estate; he wants to set up for a landowner. I need just such a man as you for a son-in-law.—Now, what

do you say to that?" he asked anxiously, talking very fast, and passing his sleeve over his fat, perspiring face, while he watched Charles anxiously. "Out with it at once, please; I have no time to wait."

"All right," Charles said coolly. He had long fancied it might come to that.

Müller embraced him, slapped him on the back, and strode away home, greatly delighted.

CHAPTER XXI



SEVERAL weeks had elapsed since the fire, and since old Mr. Boroviecki's funeral, at which Anne had not been able to be present, as she was then lying ill at the Travinskis', where she had gone to stay. She now felt much better, but not well enough to leave the house, for March had come round, bringing dreadfully cold and damp and muddy weather. Except for her nerves, which had been terribly shaken, she was almost well now.

That night of horror, with its climax—old Mr. Adam's sudden death—had made a deep and lasting impression upon her. There were days when she would sit ever so long staring into abysses out of which a dull murmur came floating to her ear—the noise of a great conflagration, with awful shrieks, flooding her with such terror that she swooned, or started up madly to escape from it.

Someone had to be in constant attendance on her, occupy her attention, and prevent it from concentrating on the past. Nina was with her most of the time, caring for her like a mother; Mrs. Vysocka also came daily, and Kama would spend whole evenings there.

Anne often remained all day long in the large corner-room, transformed into a sort of greenhouse, resounding with the twittering of birds, mingled with the murmur of a tiny fountain; and full, too, of flowers, for a goodly number of camellia bushes, covered with red and white blossoms, had been placed there.

She was sitting one day in a large, low arm-chair, when she said to Nina with deep emotion: "Do you know—never,

never in all my life have I been so tenderly cared for as now!"

"Because," Nina returned gaily, "you never were in need of such care. And if I take care of you, it's for my own sake. You are my model, and I must see to you." She was painting Anne's portrait, in her present half-recumbent attitude, her chair covered with a tiger's skin, and the blossoming camellias in the background.

It was so cosy, so quiet here! The fountain was playing, rising into the air in a spray of diamond fragments, falling in silvery dust on a snow-white basin of marble, with many a tiny water-lizard that basked in the sunbeams.

"Has Charles been here?" Nina inquired.

"He has."

"And have you——?"

"Not yet; my courage failed me. But one of these days I shall return his ring and set him free. It is so hard—so hard!"

She said no more, but something glistened in her eyes.

They did not again refer to the subject. Day after day went by monotonously and without change, except that one evening Stanley Vilchek came to call on her.

She received him in the "greenhouse" room, and sat for some time silent, watching him. Stanley Vilchek, who had dressed and scented himself with infinite care, informed her that he had entered into partnership with Max Baum, along with whom he was next spring going to found a great factory of half-wool shawls on the grounds belonging to Baum senior; and that they intended to enter into competition with Grünspan.

"And what," she asked, "has become of old Mr. Baum?"

"It's not easy to say of him anything but this: he has quite lost his wits. You know, madam, how the fire caused by that boiler's explosion wrecked his factory, which was already pretty nearly at a standstill. Well, the old man gave up all the land to Max, together with all his goods in warehouse; he even sold the looms that had been rescued from

the fire. Then he divided everything amongst his children, with the proviso that the factory building itself should remain untouched and in his sole possession as long as he lived. And he shut himself up there, and there he is living now. Quite, quite mad!—I counselled Max to have him taken—and by force, if needful—to a—a sanatorium; for the factory building would come in very handy for us. But Max will not have it.”

“And quite right of him.—Will you kindly ask Mr. Max to come and call on me?”

“With pleasure. I know he has for a long time been intending to come, and was only waiting to know that you had completely recovered.”

He stayed for a short while, doing his best to show off in her presence, and then took his leave. Anne bade him farewell with marked indifference. She had taken a strong dislike to the man, and on his departure hastened to wash her hand; she had felt his, so unpleasantly cold and damp!

“He reminds me of some reptile,” she remarked to Nina.

“There’s in him,” said Travinski, “something of a reptile, something of a beast of prey. Such a man either gets to the very top of the tree, or ends his days prematurely—in jail.” And he told Anne all about Vilchek’s getting the better of Grünspan, and his peculiar ways of making money.

“How,” she exclaimed indignantly, “can you allow him to enter your house, with all this against him?”

“He came to call upon you, madam, and I cannot help seeing him. In Lodz one cannot divide men into two classes, those who are and those who are not honest. One has to deal with both.”

“But I do not want to see him any more.”

“Very well. I shall tell the butler. But do not be shocked by what I just said. People do, not what they had rather do, but what they must.”

He smiled regretfully, with a glance at Nina, who had taken her easel away and withdrawn, in order not to hear what he said; such statements were always more than un-

pleasant to her. She went round to the camellias, and was blowing upon the pink blossoms, which opened under her dainty breath.

"Life is a hard thing—too hard!" Anne faltered.

"It is not really. Only we are too hard upon life in what we ask of it. Our dreams of the beautiful are too hard to realize; so too are our aspirations towards ideal goodness and justice, which are never satisfied, and prevent us from taking life as we find it. And this is the source of all our sufferings."

"And of all our hopes!" Nina added, setting on a stand beside Anne a vase with a China rose-bush with marvellous yellow blossoms of most subtle fragrance. "Look at this, and don't talk of unpleasant things."

At evening Joe Yaskulski dropped in. For some time past he had come regularly to read to Anne. She was informed by him of several particulars respecting Charles and his affairs, for the latter, though he came to see her daily, never spoke a word about business.

"Is your father well now?" she asked.

"For a week he has been directing the men who remove the burnt wreckage from the place."

"And you, what are you doing?"

"I also am with Mr. Boroviecki—in his office, for Mr. Baum senior has now wound up his affairs." So said young Joe, now more bashful and more given to blush than ever. Poor fellow! he had fallen most ardently in love with Anne, to whom he every night wrote interminable love-letters, which he of course never delivered, but to which he would compose answers of not less amorous import. These he would read (in great secret, and without giving any names) either to his fellow clerks, or during the musical gatherings at Malinovski's.

"Mr. Max has asked me to inquire whether he may call on you to-morrow."

"Certainly he may; I shall expect him in the afternoon," she said, with no little eagerness.

She awaited Max with impatience. When he was an-

nounced, her heart fluttered with gladness; and it was with great emotion that she stretched her hand out to welcome him. Max, much taken aback and confused, sat down at some distance, and inquired about her health in a low and rather unsteady voice.

"I am quite well, and only expecting a spell of fair weather to get out of doors—and away from Lodz altogether."

"Shall you be away for long?" Max asked eagerly.

"Perhaps for ever. I cannot yet say what I am going to do."

"Are you unhappy in Lodz?"

"I feel miserable here. Father is dead, and——" Here she broke off.

Max made no attempt to fill the pause, and they both remained in silence, but looked at each other with mutual sympathy. Anne gave him a smile so frank and kindly that Max's heart melted like wax. His love for her, so long fought down, now rose again, filling him with such joy that he would gladly have kissed the chair she sat on. Yet he remained seated, stiff and gawky, and after a few more words of banal civility, rose to take his departure.

"What, so soon?" she complained.

"I must go, and that directly. I'm due at Miss Mela Grünspan's wedding with Moritz."

"Miss Mela—Moritz's wife!"

"A very well-matched pair. She has lots of money, a father who has made several successful bankruptcies, and a fiancé cunning enough to circumvent even his father-in-law."

"But you'll come and see me again?"

"Whenever you allow me."

"Every day, then, if you wish it, and can find time."

Max, delighted beyond measure, kissed her hand and went away.

Later, when the factory lights began to gleam through the windows in the evening, Boroviecki came in. Both he and Anne remained silent for many minutes; only their eyes would meet in the twilight for an instant and immediately

look away. Then, when the lamps were lit, they spoke in low voices, so as not to break in upon the music; for Nina was playing in the next room, with wonderfully gentle touches, on the piano, drawing forth sounds like the rippling and bubbling of a streamlet.

Anne was absently turning her engagement ring round and round her finger. Each had something to say; it was on the tip of their tongues, yet neither could say it. And meanwhile Nina played on and on—the sounds floating from the instrument were now a whisper of love, of passion, with rapid fiery outbursts; they awoke in both their hearts an echo of the forgotten past.

Anne's eyes brimmed with tears, her heart with unsufferable woe, and she almost mechanically took off her engagement ring and silently gave it back to him. He likewise, without a word, took off his own and returned it. Their eyes met in one long look.

Charles could not support that tearful gaze, it stabbed him too deep, it was like a brand burning into his very soul. He bent his head and whispered, so low as hardly to be audible: "It is all my fault—all my fault!"

"No, it is mine," she replied deliberately; "for I am not able to love even unto forgiveness, and unto forgetfulness of self."

He rose. What he had heard humbled him exceedingly, all the more because he felt how ill he had treated the pale sick girl before him. He drank the cup of shame and humiliation to the dregs. Oh, what nobility shone in her eyes!—It was too much for him. He bowed to her from a distance, and turned to go.

She called him back very earnestly by his name. He stopped and faced her. She reached out her hand to his, saying quickly: "Give me your hand. This parting is not for ever; we shall meet again."

Seizing her hand, he kissed it fervently.

"With all my heart," she said, "I wish you may be happy—perfectly happy."

"Thanks, thanks," he returned, scarce able to get the

words out; silence was forced upon him. He had intended to wish her the same, but he could not. In the grip of the insane desire that had seized upon him in that instant, he feared to fall on his knees before her, to print his kisses on those pallid lips, and to press her to his heart.

So he only kissed her hand once more and hurried away.

Anne, entirely exhausted, fell back in her chair. The wounds in her soul had all opened afresh; and that dying love of hers, reviving for a moment, filled her heart with anguish and her eyes with tears. She wept long and very bitterly, but somehow in harmony with the music she heard, which now had grown more plaintive and mournful, fainter and fainter, and its strains resounded through the silent room like the echoes of muffled cries.

CHAPTER XXII



At the end of autumn in that year, the wedding of Boroviecki with Mada Müller took place. Together they walked from the altar down the long aisle, splendidly carpeted and forming on either side an avenue with palms and lighted candelabra. Outside these, crowds of people were surging like a sea. The church was literally crammed.

With serene and lofty bearing, Boroviecki walked along, his eyes sweeping the lines of acquaintances who smiled on him; but he saw nobody, and felt nothing but mortal boredom—wearied with the length of the ceremony and the purse-proud, ostentatious pomp of the whole affair. Amongst those of his acquaintances who had not been invited to the wedding, no one came to offer his congratulations outside the church; for no one had the audacity to break through the cordon that surrounded him with millions of money—the garland of richly dressed and bediamonded ladies, with their footmen in glowing liveries standing ready to hand them their wraps in the porch.

He got into the carriage with Mada, and drove off before anybody else. Mada was weeping tears of joy and bliss. Coyly, yet with blood aflame and nerves all aquiver, she nestled close to Charles—her own Charles now!

He, however, not in the least aware of the state she was in, looked out of the carriage window over the heads of the swarming crowds, over the house roofs, at the tall smoke-plumed chimneys and at the factories, loud with the din of work. And he thought, with a return on himself and the deed done that day: "Now my wedding is a fact; now I am the master of millions; now I am on the threshold of the

felicity I have dreamed." Slowly he ruminated over those thoughts, contemplating the mental pictures they evoked. And he felt with surprise that they gave him no sort of satisfaction, and left him cold, dry, unconcerned, indifferent, a prey to weariness and lassitude.

"Charles!" Mada whispered, raising her flushed face and her china-blue eyes to his.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"I am so happy. Oh, so happy!" she said shyly, resting her head upon his shoulder, and putting up her face and parted lips, eager for a kiss; but she shrank back instantly, for the crowds in the streets could see her.

He pressed her hand in a close grip, and no more was said.

The whole of the street leading to Müller's factory was thronged with workmen, who, clad in holiday attire, lined up on either side to let the carriage pass, and thundered enthusiastic greetings as they went by. At the end of the lines, just before the entrance to the yard, there stood an enormous triumphal arch, festooned with coloured draperies, adorned with emblems of labour, and bearing at its summit a huge transparency, with electric lights forming the word *Welcome!* Within the gate the lines of workmen stretched on through all the courtyards and the vast garden, as far as the palace itself.

The journey had taken so much time that, when they entered, they found all the guests had already arrived. Of these the great majority were Germans, the Poles present forming but an insignificant minority.

Müller had done everything that a Lodz millionaire should do on so great an occasion. The carpets, the furniture, the plate, and the floral and other decorations were simply astounding, for the palace had been taken in hand by Berlin upholsterers. For Müller, the day was really a great festival. He was giving his only daughter in marriage, and getting for his assistant a son-in-law. No wonder, then, that his round red face shone radiant with satisfaction. He offered his best cigars to each of his guests, slapped Charles

upon the back, pelted him with coarse jokes, tapped him on the knee, and was continually pressing him to taste of the delicacies set out in the refreshment room. At intervals he would pounce on one of the company and proudly show him all the best apartments.

"Mr. Kurovski, look around; this palace is where our children are to live. A grand place, isn't it?"

Kurovski agreed and listened with indulgent amenity while Müller went over the complete list of his furnishing expenses. Then he slipped away to Mrs. Moritz Welt, formerly Mela Grünspan, who was in one of the *salons*—a queen surrounded by her court of young men.

He remained for some time near her, attentive to her sparkling conversation, her artificial laughter, her affected postures as she walked to and fro; and at last withdrew in amazement. She had altered past recognition.

"Why, what have you done to your wife?" he asked of Moritz.

"Ah, you find her changed?"

"Into quite another person."

"That's all my doing. Now she's really a fine woman, is she not?" he said, settling his glasses.

Kurovski made no reply. He was observing Charles, who seemed but very indifferently to relish his part of a son-in-law. He was strolling about, uninterested, weary; inclined to slight his wife's family and those of all the factory-owners, and going over to chat with Max Baum, and even with Welt—with whom he was now reconciled—rather than with any of them.

"Well," Kurovski remarked to him, "it seems we have all four of us entered the Promised Land."

"If that means getting millions, we have. You are well on the way to them, Moritz is sure they'll be his, and Max is bound to earn them—unless indeed Vilchek manages to snatch them away."

"Talking of me?" cried Stanley Vilchek, drawing near. As Max's partner, he had now a sure footing in society, and could afford to give the go-by to his former associates. Which

he did, elbowing his way forward by dint of money and swagger.

"We were just saying," Kurovski replied with a laugh, "that Max is in a fair way to make his fortune, if you don't snap it up from under his nose."

"If such a thing could be done!" he murmured, licking his lips like a dog before a full plate, and then went off to pay court to a certain Miss Knaabe, ugly, vulgar, but possessed of a fortune of about two hundred thousand roubles.

Murray was sitting beside her, giving himself such ridiculous airs and paying her such funny compliments that she roared with laughter.

An orchestra had been stationed in the largest *salon* on a high platform, superbly decorated with red cotton flannel, made to imitate velvet; it now struck up the opening bars of a waltz. At the sounds, the insignificant factory officials, who had been invited only in order to enliven the party, streamed out of the refreshment room and other apartments curtained off from the great *salon*, and proceeded to dance.

Charles was meanwhile strolling about by himself in the various *salons*, flooded with light and resplendent with gorgeous finery. The invited guests were quite lost in the vastness of the immense apartments. From every corner and from amid those opulent draperies, dullness and vacuity peeped forth to mock them. He felt a great longing to get away, to lock himself up in his rooms, or to go, as he was formerly wont to do, along with Max and Moritz to some tavern or other and drink beer and talk and forget everything in the world! Such was his secret wish. But he had to do the honours of the house, and see that his beloved father-in-law should, so far as in him lay, be properly diverted. He had to converse, to smile, to pay the ladies compliments, and even talk to Mada now and then, and give orders besides to the servants, a function which no one else was able to undertake.

His mother-in-law was creeping about, hiding in corners, dressed in a magnificent silk gown that put her to shame, for she did not know what to do with herself. All this splen-

dour, and the many faces she now saw for the first time, frightened her so much that she glided from chamber to chamber, no one taking the least notice of her. Wilhelm was most of the time in the refreshment room, tippling with his friends, and embracing Charles whenever he saw him, having conceived for him a rare and ardent affection. As to Mada, she was so enraptured, so ecstatically happy, that she could see nothing and nobody but her husband, whom she sought for everywhere, and, when she found him, wearied with fond caresses.

At midnight Borowiecki felt so worn out that he spoke to Yaskulski, all dressed up for the occasion, who acted as master of the ceremonies. "You may as well tell them to give supper a bit earlier; we are all bored past endurance."

"Supper cannot be given before the appointed hour," he replied gravely, more than a little tipsy by this time, though he bore himself with stiff stateliness, twirled his moustache, and looked down on the millionaires. "Those German dogs!" he muttered, though at the same time serving them obsequiously.

At last, supper was served in the great dining-hall, and the festive board groaned under the burden of plate and of flowers and of crystal glasses. Charles sat beside his bride, who was as red as a peony. He listened patiently to the speeches made, and the toasts drunk, and the broad jests rapped out in his honour.

Towards the end of the banquet, when the guests had grown merry and were in the high glee which is imparted by champagne, he was compelled to kiss and embrace all those fat tradesmen, exuding grease at every pore, who ate like wolves and drank like fishes. And afterwards, when the rite of putting the married women's cap on the bride's head had been performed, he was set upon by the whole crew of cousins and aunts, now of his family.

It was excruciating, and his head had begun to ache; so, as soon as ever he could, he slipped away from their loving affectionate claws, and took refuge in the conservatory, there to cool himself and rub his face clean from the traces which

their kisses had left. But here, too, he had no luck. Scarcely had he taken a seat on a sofa there, screened off by verdant shrubs, when several people belonging to or owners of factories came in and modestly hid themselves amid the greenery. And, as a climax, in rushed Müller senior, and mournfully cast his too abundant libations on a beautiful bed of flowering cineraria, that gleamed like gems in the lamplight.

Boroviecki made a hasty exit. But on coming to the banqueting-hall, now filled exclusively by footmen, he happened upon a very different scene. Matthew, completely drunk, was having words with Mrs. Müller, who, though appalled by his threatening mien, had timidly ordered the remains of the banquet and the unemptied bottles of wine to be stowed away in the side-board.

"Such a thing! (hic!)—Madam!—Another pair of shoes! It's our wedding-day—our feast!—We are married!—We shan't give either to eat or to drink to the Germans (hic!)—madam!"

Here he beat the table with his fist and pointed to the door.

"You, madam (hic!)—go to bed; we'll see to the wine—I'll take a drop—so will the lads—it's our wedding-day—our great feast.—Servants, pour out the wine—obey Mr. Matthew!—If not—smash your faces—and there you are.—All right—cholera and beetroots!—Here's to master—and out of doors with the others!"

Terrified, Mrs. Müller ran out to look for Charles, while Matthew threw himself back in an arm-chair, and went on incoherently, as he thumped with his fist on the table. "Our wedding it is (hic!)—Mr. Director! We've got the factory, got the wife—got the palace too!—And to hell (hic!) with the Germans!—If not, smash their faces—feet in the gutter—rout 'em out—make a clean sweep of 'em—cholera and beetroots!"

And afterwards?

Afterwards weeks, months, years elapsed, all consigned to

oblivion—gliding past as quietly as, with inexorable succession, fresh spring days come, fresh births, fresh deaths; as quietly as life's thread is spun with its three strands—yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. Since Boroviecki's wedding, however, this lapse of years had brought about many a change amongst our old acquaintances.

More than ever, Lodz was now living in its own vertiginous way, throbbing feverishly and expanding likewise, building in hot haste, astonishingly and perpetually mighty in its concentrated force, which went on like an irresistible torrent, spreading over those fields where not so long since corn had grown and kine had grazed, and where now whole streets of new houses and factories, all alive with business and sweating and swindling, had arisen in their stead. The town resembled a tremendous whirlpool, wherein men, mills, stuffs, passions, millionaires and paupers, revellers and starving folk, revolved with frantic swiftness to the roar of machinery, of lust, of hunger, of hatred; to the noise of the conflict of all men against all men and all things. All rushed onward with the impetus of elementary forces let loose—onward over dead men and factories in ruins—to possess those millions that seemed springing forth from every inch of ground in that Promised Land.

Kurovski was making his fortune at full speed; Max Baum and Stanley Vilchek were now a powerful firm, making shoddy goods and successfully underselling the firm of Grünspan, Welt, & Grosman. Welt, being a partner in that firm, never drove out but in his own coach, and knew no one in the street unless he had half a million of money.

The Bucholc firm, formerly managed by Charles, still continued to be the first in Lodz. In his competition with it Shaya Mendelsohn had not succeeded. He had again suffered from a conflagration, which gave him the means of enlarging the works and employing two thousand more men. Latterly he had become an out-and-out philanthropist, sweating his employees to the uttermost limit, and with the profits building them a splendid hospital, and a home as well for cripples and men no longer able to work.

Grosplik still continued to pick pockets legally, and with all the more industrious ardour after marrying his daughter Mary to a certain count, ruined in health and estate by fast living, whom he had therefore both to nurse and to maintain.

Travinski, who by dint of perseverance and patient work had managed to retrieve his former losses, had been for a couple of years enjoying an excellent reputation, and his firm was now highly respected.

Old Müller had given up his factory to Boroviecki, and left Lodz altogether, living with Mrs. Müller at his son's, for whom he had bought landed property. Wilhelm, who had fallen a victim to the disease of snobbery, was about to marry a countess, wrote his name De Meller, dressed his servants in livery to attend him when on a visit to Lodz, and quartered the armorial bearings of his future wife with those of Boroviecki! With the factory he had nothing to do but to take his share in the enormous sums it brought in.

Boroviecki was at present sole master of the huge concern. During those few years he had developed it immensely, reformed the whole system of weaving flannelette, raised his products to the highest degree of perfection, built new departments, and discovered new markets for his surplus textiles; he was unceasingly pressing forward.

The four years which had gone by since his marriage with Mada and his succession to the factory had been years of simply superhuman activity. Rising at six, he used to go to bed at midnight; never took a trip, never any enjoyment, never had a taste of the life which his millions had put into his grasp—in fact he could scarcely be said to live at all. His life was work. Plunged in the vortex of affairs as he was, his factory, together with the disposition of the floods of gold it produced, absorbed all his thoughts, all his time, all his strength—sucked him dry—a devil-fish with a thousand tentacles about him.

He had them then at last, those millions he had so hankered after; he was now handling them every day, living in their midst, haunted by them always and everywhere. But

this state of overwork, lasting for so many years, had exhausted his body, although the heaps of money amassed gave him no satisfaction; quite the contrary. Every day he felt more weary, more indifferent, more dejected. This weariness was now acting with greater force upon him; he now began to realize how ill things went with him, how very lonely he was.

Mada had been quite a good wife to him, and a still better wet-nurse and attendant on his son. In that respect she was of great service, but could be nothing else, and did not even dream of being anything else. To her he was a sort of fetish, adored from afar, but not to be approached unless he showed himself not unwilling; she durst not so much as speak to him if not sure that he wanted her to speak. And he—well, he let her worship and fall down before him, at times flinging her a kind word or a pleasant smile in reward. As to any real tenderness, any true emotion of the heart, these were of rare occurrence.

Never had he had any friends, but always plenty of acquaintances—men well-disposed towards him, and his former fellow workers. Now, however, in proportion as his greatness waxed, they all slunk away, lost in the mass of mere humanity, separated and cut off from him by the impassable barrier of his millions. Nor did he associate with the millionaires themselves. He had too little time in the first place; and then he despised them too heartily, and there was too much antagonism between him and them, his competitors and rivals.

There were only a few of his intimates with whom social relations were possible. But he shunned Kurovski, who had been set against him by his treatment of Anne, and took every opportunity to wound him. He also felt for Moritz Welt a dislike too strong for cordial relations. Neither could he get on with Max Baum, though they often met, and Max was even godfather to his boy. There was no warmth of friendship between them; no affection, but only the good-fellowship of old days. Like Kurovski, Max bore a grudge against him; he too could not forget his behaviour towards Anne.

So Boroviecki now was ever more and more a prey to loneliness and the terrible void around him, a void that was filled neither by the millions which he gained, nor by the health-destroying work which he did. And now at last his soul began to suffer the direful pangs of spiritual starvation. He did not indeed as yet clearly realize what the matter with him was. All he knew was that everything wearied him—factories, business enterprises, people, money-making—everything.

Such were his thoughts one day when going round to visit his works. The gigantic walls of the great edifice were shaking with the din of strenuous labour within them. He walked through every department, aloof, gloomy, speaking to no one, and mechanically made his way on, gazing vacantly at the machinery in action, at the men working with unflagging industry, and at the windows flooded with spring sunlight. Then he took the elevator to the drying-room, where tissues were lying in millions of metres, on long tables, on the floor, or piled on tiny trucks. He passed along, treading upon them with a carelessness of which he was but partially conscious, and stood at length at the window-sill, from which streaks of corn-land were visible, with a fringe of forest at the horizon. He looked out at that bright sunny April day, brimming over with light and joy and warmth, at the delicate green of the grass, at the pellucid hazy clouds far away in the depths of a pale-blue sky.

Presently, driven by a dull, indefinite longing, he left the chamber, and walked through one pavilion after another, from section to section; through all the infernal whirring, humming, roaring sounds and all the evil smells in the stifling, heated air he walked, full of the thought that everything there was his property—the kingdom of his dreams. Yes, they had all been realized! How bitterly he smiled, as his mind went back to the past and his illusions of former days! Illusions they were, since he had so fondly believed that the possession of millions would fill his soul with marvelous and ecstatic bliss.

“And what have they given me?” was now his thought.

Oh! certainly, this his kingdom had brought him something—but what? Nothing but lassitude, weariness of life!

No, they had also brought him this ravenous craving of his soul, and this yearning, so vague, yet so potent and so painful, that now gripped his heart. And alas!—there—away outside the windows of his dyeing-room, in which he was now sitting, spring was coming over the fields; and all was so beautifully bright, and the sonorous clamour of children was resounding, and the sparrows chirruped merrily, and wreaths of rosy smoke ascended on high! There all was so cheerful, so gay, so full of the joy of reviving nature, that he would fain be there himself, to cry out and sing and roll on the grass and float among the clouds and blow with the breezes and wave in the air with the sunlit trees, and live—live—live with his whole heart, his whole mind, while every fibre of his being thrilled with ecstasy!

“What’s to come now?” he thought, as he listened to the roar of his factory. To this question he found no answer. “This is what I wanted and longed for; and I have got it!” he said to himself, looking at the red walls of that factory of his, with all the hatred of a slave for his enslaver—that detested tyrant who was peeping merrily out of those thousand windows, working away so furiously that all his pulses throbbed, while he chanted, with the many voices of the deep-toned engines, his great hymn to Mammon!

Having enough of the factory, he went down to his office. Men of business, tradesmen, men seeking work, men with a thousand other demands on his time, thronged his ante-chamber and waited impatiently for his appearance; but he slipped out by a side door, and leisurely strolled into town.

He noticed no one, tortured as he was within by a frightful sense of lassitude and of spiritual starvation. The whole town was flooded with sunlight and seething with movement and uproar. All the factories, like so many strongholds, were manned with workers in full activity. From every street, every house, every hovel, and even from the fields outside, the sounds of work came to his ears, with the clamour of

machinery, the confused noises of fierce struggling, the pantings of those who fought, the pæans of those who conquered.

All that—oh, how tired it made him feel! He threw a glance of unspeakable contempt at Baron Meyer, who, lolling back in his magnificent equipage, was driving along, bloated with riches and looking for all the world like a rosy-gilled fatted hog! “A beast, for which the acme of happiness is to have his sty—and his title-deeds!—And why can I not make the same use of my riches as he does of his? Yet,” he thought, “men like him live in entire satisfaction.”

Alas! to enjoy life after the fashion of the Lodzian millionaires was not in him. What pleasure, indeed, could such a life procure him? He cared nothing for the magnificence which surrounded him; and the mere ostentatious show of wealth was both undesired and needless.

Why, then, should he go on making millions? His expenditure could never rise to the height of what his income gave. Had he not been a bondsman to those millions long enough? Had they not taken enough strength and life out of him already? Had he not long enough worn their golden fetters?

Still more lamentable did his position appear presently, as he looked forward into the future, and the long years of weary labour which lay before him.

On and on he walked, wandering aimlessly, until he happened to reach Helenovski Park. Entering, he traversed the avenues, still damp after a rain, viewing with interest the sprouting blades of grass and the pale-green leaves, gently trembling in the cool, though sun-soaked air. The avenues were deserted, except for a few sparrows chirping there, and some crows hopping about.

He walked till he was quite tired, with fierce pertinacity, but somehow found himself continually back in the alleys where he had trysted with Lucy. “Lucy!—Emma!” he said, half aloud, with something like regret for them, and looked round him on the solitary park.

Bitter it was to know that here no one expected him, or would come to meet him; that he was quite alone. “How

short a lapse of time—and yet how long!” Ay, once upon a time he had indeed loved—loved passionately, madly! And now?

Now, instead of that youth of his, with all its tempests, he had his millions—and was weary of them! His lips curled in contempt—contempt of himself, scorn of his present state. And he walked on.

He went all round the park, and nearing the entrance on his return, met a long procession of little girls coming in, with two ladies following in the rear. He stepped aside, gave a cursory glance——

“Anne!”

He raised his hat as instinctively as the words burst from his lips.

Yes, it was she. Instantly she came forward to him with outstretched hands.

“It is so long, so very long since I saw you last!” she exclaimed, with a look of joy.

He kissed her hand and gazed at her in amazement. Yes, it was Anne, the very Anne of those days of old in Kurov; but so young, so beautiful, so full of strength and fascinating charm, and of grace, equally simple and high-born!

“Let us walk along after the little ones, if you have any leisure.”

“But what is this band of children?” he asked her.

“They belong to my Home.”

“Your Home?”

“I could not remain idle. And this work has given me such great delight that I am now trying for leave to found another such Home.”

“Can you feel any delight in caring for those little ones?”

“Any delight? Perfect happiness rather; I am fulfilling a duty, and doing good, though on a very small scale.—And you—are you satisfied?” she inquired in a lower tone. Her voice trembled, as her eyes swiftly perused his features—so worn, so sickly-looking!

“I am, I am!—Very much so,” he replied with a quick,

husky utterance, for his heart was beating so violently that he could hardly breathe.

They went on in silence, the little girls going round the pond, and striking up some song for children with their shrill treble voices, sounding partly like the chink of gold and partly like the rustling of leaves on grass.

"You look so very poorly," she said, her eyelids half-closed to hide her deep compassion from him, as with sisterly love and sorrow she noted his hollow eyes, his protruding cheek-bones, and the deep furrows on his face, and the sprinkling of grey about his temples.

"Pray do not grieve for me. I have what I wanted to have. I wanted millions, I have them—if they are insufficient for my life, that's my own fault. Yes, it is my own fault if I have succeeded in getting everything except happiness. And if I am starving for it now, it serves me right."

Here he stopped short, for a torrent of bitterness was surging up in his heart; he saw the tears trickling down her cheeks, and her lips quivering with the attempt to conceal her pain. At the sight of her tears he could say no more; it pierced his heart with a fearful pang, and he could only shake hands with her and hurry away, lest he should tell her all that was on his mind.

"Out of town, and as fast as you can!" he shouted, leaping into a cab. From head to foot he was trembling with the emotion aroused in him by the dreamy memories surging up from the dark places of his brain, from the abysmal depths of his heart, to form pictures of such beauty and so radiant with joy that he struggled with all the power of his will to retain them, to satisfy the desires of his hungry soul, and so forget the present and the misery that was always before him.

It was of no avail; for, on the screen of consciousness, continually and with the swiftness of lightning, there would arise other pictures, other memories—memories of all the wrongs he had inflicted on Anne, of all his sins against her love. He sat dazed, with half-closed eyes, almost as one

dead, though all the time using his utmost endeavours to silence that great cry of his soul which echoed through all his being, to control his heart that had waked up at her sight, and all those yearnings after happiness which had started up in him, full of irresistible strength.

"I am rightly served—most rightly served!" he repeated to himself at times, with savage pleasure, wallowing in his own torments and the recognition of the state he was in and of the evil he had done. At length he mastered himself, and got the better of his thoughts. But it was a bitter victory, which had cost him such extremity of effort that he would not go home, but drove to his office, locked himself in, sent away Matthew, who had been there in attendance, and remained quite alone.

"Oh, mine has been a wasted life!" he said presently, starting up from the ottoman he had sat down upon. The thought had worked its way out of the dark recesses of his brain, rent him with tormenting certitude, and cast a dazzling but excruciating ray into his very soul.

He peered about the dusky room, as if he had suddenly come to himself, and saw all things in a new light.

"And why wasted?" he asked himself. And, opening the window, he set himself to reflect.

The street noises sounded fainter and fainter as the town sank to rest in that pleasant night of spring. It was a greenish darkness, save for the twinkling gleams of starlight, and enveloped all the town as in a winding-sheet. From his window the huge bulk of the town was seen, dimly spread out far and wide. Here and there a few lights were visible in those factories that worked by night; and their hum, wafted to his ears by the wind, came like the dull leafy rustling of a forest.

"Why wasted?" he asked himself once again, nerving himself with might and main to the impending struggle with his soul; for it began to make reply with the reminiscences of all his past, weaving together all those threads of memory that had fallen into oblivion, but now had risen again and were present. He resisted, he fought them, but unavail-

ingly. He was compelled to see them; compelled, too, to hear all the voices of the past. Submitting to the inevitable, he looked down into himself with terrible and sorrowful interest. He reviewed his past and present life—forty years all told—which, like a thread dangling from the spindle of time, let its strands float loose before him; and he could look into each of them. And into each of them did he look.

The town slumbered in deep shadow, stretched over the ground like an octopus with factories for tentacles; the far-off widely scattered electric suns—a flock of cranes with heads of fire—looked out into the night with sparkling eyes, and watched over the rest of that sleeping Moloch of a town.

"Well, well. After all, I am what I am—what I had to be," he said, with a note of haughty challenge in his voice. But he could not gag his conscience, which by this time was thoroughly awakened, nor still the cries of his beliefs, long set at naught, of his ideals, long forsworn, of his life itself, long contaminated by self-seeking. All these cried aloud within him: "Thou hast lived for thyself alone, thou hast trampled everything down to please thy vanity, to satisfy thy pride, and to become a man of millions!"

"Quite true. Yes, I have sacrificed all things to my career—to *my career!*" He repeated the words, like a self-inflicted blow in the face; he was overwhelmed with a flood of shame and humiliation.

All had indeed been sacrificed—and to what end? To the raking together of a heap of useless money! He had no friend, no peace, no pleasure, no happiness, no desire even to live; nothing. Nothing!

"Man cannot live for himself alone; if he does, he must needs be unhappy." This saying he had heard before, and knew well, but he had never yet realized its profound truth.

"That is why I have thrown away my own happiness," he thought. Then, remembering his interview with Anne, and acting upon a sudden impulse, he wrote her a long letter, asking for the information he required, being about to found a home for his working-people's children.

Then he resumed his meditations, which now concerned

the ways and means of setting himself free, and finding some aim in life to occupy the long, long days of the future before him, the very anticipation of which filled him with dismay. Slowly the hours glided by; the town slept with the uneasy sleep of a fevered man. Through the gathering mists of the night, embroidered with dots of light in patterns, there passed now and again a vague uneasy palpitation, or a long, low moan, as of pain—perhaps a moan from the tired engines, the exhausted workmen, or the perishing trees?

Again there would come a shriek from the other end of some empty street, quavering through the air, and dying away into silence. Or an inexplicable thrill, made up of mysterious lights and voices and sobs and peals of laughter—the whole ascending and descending scale of life, past and future, echoing through the town like dreams dreamed and murmured by its walls, by its mist-enshrouded trees, and by the used-up, over-handled earth.

And then from time to time there would prevail a stillness so deep, so awful, that one could feel therein the beats of the pulses of that dormant Titan who lay stretched upon the ground like a child on its mother's breast.

But far away, outside the city, in the fields around the "Promised Land," and in the unknown depths of the night, there was always a stir and a seething of unrest—murmurs of voices, sounds of rattling and clattering and rumbling, and outbursts of laughter, of sobbing, of curses——

Along every road, shining with the pools left by the spring rains and leading to this Promised Land from every quarter of the globe; on every by-way and path through the green fields and the orchards in blossom; through woods filled with the fragrance of the young spring birch-trees; through ruined villages and round impassable morasses, there were coming troops of people, hundreds of creaking wagons, thousands of railway carriages rushing on; and countless sighs were breathed, countless burning glances darted through the gloom towards this Promised Land, in ardent longing to catch sight of it as soon as it appeared.

From many a remote plain, from uplands and from de-

caying villages, from the great metropolis and from the tiniest townships; from straw-thatched cottages and from lordly mansions; from the highest ranks of life and from the lowest, men were coming in endless procession to the Promised Land. They came to fertilize it with their blood—to pour out their strength and youth and health—their freedom, hopes, and sufferings, their brains, and work, their faith and dreams.

To satiate this Promised Land—or rather this octopus of a town—country-sides were unpeopled, forests laid waste; the earth was despoiled of its treasures; men and women were born to no other end. And it sucked everything up into itself, its all-devouring maw swallowed men and things indiscriminately, and took possession both of earth and sky, giving to some few a heap of useless millions, and to the many, arduous work and starvation wages!

Thinking over all this, Charles paced the room, pausing to gaze often and long into the night and over the town before him. The wan, pallid dawn was now glimmering in the east; the morning sky passed slowly to an emerald tint; under the eaves of the conservatory, swallows were beginning to twitter a little, and the trees waved in the fresh cool air of day-break. It soon grew brighter; soon the nearest white zinc roofs became visible through the mist which still enveloped them; and presently old Baum's ruined factory stood out clearly, with its broken walls and windows and fallen chimneys, and appeared out of the mist—a weird skeleton, broken all to pieces, blackened, scarred, dismal.

Boroviecki was quite calm now. He had found his way, and knew what the purpose of all his future life was to be. He had broken away, turned his back upon the self of all his past, and now felt himself a new man, melancholy indeed, but strong and determined to fight the good fight.

He was extremely pale. During that single night he had grown visibly older. The furrow across his forehead had deepened and his face bore the mark of dogged determination, which bitter experience had graven upon it.

"Happiness is out of the question for me; but I will make others happy," he said with cool deliberation. And his eyes, full of unconquerable resolution, embraced the whole town, as yet sound asleep, and the spaces beyond, invisible, but on the point of looming out of the darkness.

